# THE
# VEDIC LAW OF MARRIAGE

## OR

## The Emancipation of Woman

A. MAHADEVA SASTRI

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# THE
# VEDIC LAW OF MARRIAGE
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# PREFACE.

MARRIAGE is a social institution of such vital importance that a nation's ideals of marriage and married life have a direct bearing on its well-being and progress or the reverse. The truth of this proposition is well borne out by the history of the Indo-Aryans. The vicissitudes of their long and hoary civilization can be traced to the gradual changes in their ideals of marriage and married life and in the status assigned to woman in society.

Three important stages with reference to the laws of marriage and the status of woman may be distinguished in the history of the Indo-Aryan civilization as revealed in the extant literature.

There was a time when, among the cultured classes of the Aryan community, woman's status was almost equal to man's; when she had equal opportunities for receiving a complete education and was therefore equally free to choose between an independent life of singleness devoted entirely

to spiritual culture and a married life of tempora. interests permeated with spiritual devotion ; when this idea of equality as reflected in the Vedic ideal of marriage—a free self-chosen life-long union of man and woman, of two friendly and sympathetic souls combining in harmony their temporal interests and spiritual aspirations—was a determining factor in all social relations between man and woman ; when at the time of marriage the bridegroom and the bride were both adults having passed through a well-devised course of physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual discipline as a preparation for a proper discharge of the duties pertaining to their joint life as householders, and were thus fully alive to the responsibilities that would devolve on them respectively from the very day of their marriage. Then the Aryans were a free, manly, vigorous, energetic, enterprising, progressive, noble and spiritual people, as represented by the Brahmarshis like Vasishtha and Vamadeva, Rajarshis like Ikhshvaku, Vishvamitra and Janaka, women Rishis and Brahmavadins like Ghosha, Gargi, Maitreyi and Sulabha. This was the golden age in the history of the Aryan Civilization.

The next stage was marked by a transition to a lower ideal of married life and to a lower status

of women, and by a corresponding change for worse in the fortunes of the people. Glancing over the period which intervened between the ancient golden age and the modern dark period of our civilization, we find the idea of equality of man and woman replaced by the idea of woman's subordination to man. Woman's early education became at first limited, and afterwards altogether neglected, till it became a recognised rule in practice that no woman should be taught the Véda and Sciences and should offer sacrificial worship independently of man. It was held that woman was not qualified to lead an independent life of singleness entirely devoted to spiritual culture. She was married earlier in life than man, the wife being regarded as the husband's help-mate or handmaid intended to assist him in the discharge of his duties as a householder, not as his co-partner and co-operator with equal responsibilities in the joint life. The offspring of the union of such unequal pairs, unequal in culture and status, were less vigorous and enterprising than before; they grew narrow-minded and conventional. Formalism took the place of free original thinking; outward forms engrossed men's attention, instead of the living inward thoughts which expressed themselves but partially in those forms. The place of the Rishis who discovered new useful truths of

universal application was taken by Acharyas (such as Harita, Jaimini, Badarayana and other Sutrakaras) who devoted themselves to the task of collecting, arranging, preserving, interpreting and speculating upon the accumulated fruits of the creative and progressive civilization that had gone by; while the place of the Rajarshis, the wise rulers and warriors of mighty power who carried all before them and ventured out single-handed to extend the reign of civilization and righteousness to the far-off unknown regions beyond, was taken by princes who were content to reign according to conventional laws within the limits of their immediate rule. The people in general organised themselves into classes with sharply defined privileges and disabilities attached to each class.

Coming to the present age, when the society is governed by the laws laid down in the Smritis, we see that the cultured classes hold woman as an embodiment of sensualism and evil against which man has ever to guard himslf. She is religiously excluded from all education and is ordained to lead a life of dependence on man in all concerns of life, temporal as well as spiritual. It is held as the duty of men to exercise proper control over women that they may not go astray. Against all injunctions of the Smritis, boys in their

teens and still earlier ages and girls in infancy and childhood are married together for life-long union—or for life-long widowhood in the case of some unfortunate girls—without an adequate training for the responsible life of a householder, and without any sense of responsibility on the part of the girl, and often on the part of the boy as well; and thus married early, they often begin their married life as man and woman too early. While women are compelled to marry at an early age before puberty, and are not allowed to marry again when widowed or are even committed to fire alive in the name of religion along with the dead husband, men are allowed unbounded freedom to marry when they please or as often as they please or not to marry at all. As the outcome of these departures from the original ideal of married life and the status of woman, there is presented to us the sorry spectacle of the Hindu of the present day, weak in physique, ease-loving, conservative, superstitious, addicted to custom, feeding on the fruits of a past civilization which is in a state of deterioration and decay in all important phases of national life. The ancient Rishis and medieval Acharyas have their successors in the modern Bhattas who know not what the investigation of a new truth means and who hold it a sin to depart

even slightly from the established custom which governs the interpretation of Vedas and Smritis instead of being governed by them. Politically the people have no recognised status in the comity of nations, having been brought under subjection by one foreign nation after another, and there is no native prince who holds independent sway over any portion of the land as its king. People in general are divided and sub-divided into castes and sub-castes, into sects and sub-sects, with narrowed sympathies and no conscious regard for the welfare of the nation as a whole.

It being thus evident that a nation's marriage laws and ideals and the status assigned to woman in it have a great deal to do with its strength or weakness, with its progress or decay, no lover of India who will see its people recover their lost position among the nations of the earth can afford to overlook this aspect of the Indian social life at present. We find, therefore, coeval with the awakening of the modern India, attempts made to reform the existing laws and customs of marriage, to reclaim the Indian women from utter ignorance and illiteracy, and to improve their status in other ways. The steady work of social reformers of all shades of opinion, carried on from within and without against terrible odds and under most discouraging circumstances, has no doubt produced

a wholesome change in the public opinion of the educated community and led to the initiation of some measures of practical reform here and there on a small scale, though it may be doubted whether these measures will all conduce to the national progress. At any rate the results achieved so far are out of all proportion to what yet remains to be done.

One of the chief obstacles in the way of reform seems to me that the interpretation of the Shastras in favour of reform has not been based on the line of exegesis which would carry conviction to the leaders of the orthodox community, who attach all importance to the traditional method of interpretation. When, as a member of the Aryadharmojjivini Sabha in Mysore, I undertook the investigation of the question of marriage, I perceived this defect in the interpretation of the Shastras on the side of reform. It has struck me that the sound principles of exegesis adopted by Jaimini, Badarayana, Apastamba and other recognized ancient authorities, if applied rigorously in our investigation, would yield valuable results, and that an exposition of the subject based on such a method would bring home to the mind of the orthodox scholars the justice of the cause of reform and the need that exists for it. A strict application of the same method in the investigation

of other questions of importance will throw much light on them and offer solutions to many a perplexing problem of the Indian community. Then the Shastras will prove a help to the social reformer instead of an obstacle it often is as interpreted by exegetists during the last one thousand years and more, and then the cause of social reform will be divested of the stigma of irreligion and heresy now invariably associated with it. In fact an interpretation of the Shastras on the principles of true exegesis will bring into relief the fundamental religious basis of all measures of social reform and improvement which will suggest themselves to the investigator. Unless the measures of reform are given a sound religious basis, their adoption will not prove beneficial to the people at large and will not take a permanent root in the Aryan polity.

By interpreting the Vedic texts and the Smritis bearing on marriage and married life according to the principles of interpretation laid down in the Mimamsa of Jaimini, I have arrived at some important conclusions as to the original ideal of marriage and married life as laid down in the Veda, the highest authority on Law, and also as to the causes of the later deviations from that lofty ideal. These conclusions are suggestive of the lines of reform and progress which will not fail

to commend themselves at once to the most radical reformer who bases his faith solely on common sense, reason and science, and to the most orthodox Hindu who must render unquestioning allegiance to the Veda above all other scriptures. The results of my investigation are in course of elaboration for a thorough systematic exposition of the subject, and will be published later on. But the line of the investigation and the main conclusions arrived at will be found stated in outline in the following pages.

The several sections comprised in this booklet, including the opening essay which led to the later discussion in a local bi-weekly newspaper, were all written at first in a hurry, as called forth by the occasions which will be found briefly stated at the opening of the several sections; so that the indulgent reader will, I hope, kindly excuse the discursive form in which the matter is presented, involving some repetitions of ideas and also some looseness of expression here and there which may have escaped my notice in the course of my revision of the original newspaper cuttings for their reappearance in the garb of a pamphlet. The only excuse for their publication at all in this form is *firstly* my wish to invite helpful suggestions and criticisms of all sorts on the views herein set forth, of which I will gladly avail myself in the

projected exhaustive exposition of the subject, and *secondly* to bring early to the notice of the public, as suggested by some of my friends, the main results of my investigation.

A. MAHADEVA SASTRI.

*21st February, 1908.*

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# Collected Essays

OF

## Pandit A. MAHADEVA SASTRI, B.A.,

ON

# Vedic Religion and Social Reform

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## Vol. I.

## The Vedic Law of Marriage.

# FOREWORD

My study of Hindu social institutions such as caste and marriage with special reference to their *original Vedic basis* dates from 1905 when an association for the resuscitation of the sway ot true Aryan ideals of life was formed in Mysore, with the designation of *Arya-Dharma-Ujjivini-Sabha* and I was elected one of its Secretaries—Literary Secretary. The first fruits of this study took the form of an address to the association's anniversary meeting of 1907 in which I dealt with the question of the marriageable age of girls, then being hotly discussed in the Sabha. The address was published in 1908 as a pamphlet entitled *Vedic Law of Marriage.* Since then I have continued my studies, the results having been given out in various forms from time to time. I have embodied them mostly in lectures at public meetings convened for the purpose, in my presidential addresses at Social Conferences, in discourses at Theosophical Conventions, Conferences and Federations, in my Editorial leaders and notes in the English and Vernacular periodicals I edited while at Mysore, in articles in *New India* and *The Commonweal* and replies to criticisms which appeared therein. In a few cases the results of my studies were given out as expert evidence in Law Courts and as answers to questions in the course of debates with learned pandits including the head of a leading *mutt.* Out of these

expositions a considerable portion consisting of fully written out lectures as well as notes of lectures still await publication.

Ever since the issuing of the first pamphlet there has been a continuous demand for the literature; but recently I have found myself quite unable to meet the persistent demand as some of the pamphlets have gone out of print, while a large mass of literature, lying scattered over in a number of periodical publications, is not readily available. With a view to making all this literature easily accessible to those interested in the subject, I have proposed to publish in a collected form all the disquisitions and notes that have been already published and whatever else deserves publication out of the unpublished notes and lectures.

In this volume I have brought together most of my essays and notes already published, dealing with the question of marriage. I have, however, thought it proper to include in this volume my lecture on *Ancient Hindu Ideal of Education*, as it deals with *Brahmacharya* or the student-life of boys and girls which, according to the Vedic Law of Marriage, forms a necessary preparation for marriage and married life,—a preparation on which I have laid much stress as deserving special consideration in any scheme of Hindu Marriage Reform. The other essays and notes wil be grouped under separate heads and published in separate volumes as follows :

*Vedic Religion and Caste* ;
*Vedic Basis of Hinduism* ;

*Social Reform on Vedic lines*;
*Objections and Answers.*

The several sections of the subject-matter of the present volume have been arranged in the chronological order of their original production, which will serve to indicate how the thesis has developed in its details with the progress of my studies. It has indeed been a source of intense satisfaction and a strong incentive to further studies that my later studies in detail of marriage and other socio-religious institutions have not only confirmed the main conclusions drawn at first by the application of the fundamental principles of Vedic exegesis to the interpretation of the texts bearing on marriage, but have also thrown a very illuminative light on some of those aspects of our institutions such as marriage, caste and ritual which, as treated in Dharma-Sutras and Smritis, convey no intelligible idea or appear somewhat ludicrous. The results obtained so far has strengthened my faith in the method I have adopted of determining the main import of the propositions forming the subject-matter of the several kinds of our scriptural texts. The method here followed is one planned by a mind which was early imbued with the spirit of western philosophy and inductive science and later on trained in the eastern methods of exegesis by a purposeful and strenuous study—extending over thirty years—of original Vedic texts and ritualistic and philosophical Sutras in the light of the masterly exegetical expositions of Sabara, Sankara, Suresvara, Bhatta-Kumarila, Sayana, etc.,

and in a most favourable environment consisting in a constant and close association with eminent pandits and a well-equipped library of Sanskrit Literature.

In issuing these disquisitions in a collected form, my object is not merely to make the results of my studies in this direction up to date readily accessible to those who have already appreciated them in part, but also to invite further opinions based on a fuller study of my theses from those who have adversely criticised my early conclusions and objected to my interpretation of some of the texts quoted in support of those conclusions. It is due on my part to these critics to mention here that my interpretation of one or two passages has had to be slightly altered in the light of their criticisms, though such alteration has not very materially affected the conclusions based on them.

In concluding this foreword, it is my pleasure as well as duty to convey my sincere thanks to the enterprising publisher, Mr. V. Venkatesvara Sastri of Messrs. V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons, who has so readily and enthusiastically undertaken the publication of this collection at considerable cost in these times of strain and stress.

ADAYAR, A. MAHADEVA SASTRI.

*5th September 1918.*

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# I

# THE VEDIC LAW OF MARRIAGE

# The Vedic Law of Marriage.

## CHAPTER I.

[A paper read on the evening of the 20th October 1907 at the third annual meeting of the Aryadharmojjivini Sabha held in the Rangacharlu Memorial Hall, Mysore, Mr. H. V. Nanjundayya, M. A., M.L., President of the Sabha, occupying the chair.]

**Preamble.**

The discussions which went on at the meetings of the Aryadharmojjivini Sabha in Mysore on various points connected with the question of marriage roused my personal interest in the subject, to which I had previously paid no special attention as all my studies had been monopolised by the Vedanta and kindred systems of philosophy. I have, however, since studied the subject with particular care and attention, investigating original authorities, not relying solely on the exegetical works of a comparatively recent period, known as the Nibandha-Granthas on Dharma-Shastra, which alone are referred to by the pandits of the present day in regard to social questions of importance, such as marriage, as well as in other religious and social matters. I shall now proceed to state briefly the line of the investigation I have

adopted, the authorities relied on, and the conclusions arrived at, reserving a fuller and more systematic treatment of the subject for a future occasion.

**Laws based on (1) sensuous and (2) supersensuous experience**

2. The laws, commandments, or rules of action, laid down in our Shastras are of two distinct kinds. *Firstly*, there are rules which man, as he is at present constituted, cannot discover for himself without the teaching of the Shastras. The rule, for instance, which says "He who wishes to attain Svarga, or heavenly happiness after death, should perform the sacrificial rite called Jyotishtoma," cannot be formulated by man, unless the Veda has taught it. *Secondly*, there is a rule in the Shastra which says that "the pupil should follow the teacher." This rule can be formulated by man without the Shastra teaching it. He may find out for himself that if the teacher should instruct his pupil, the latter should implicitly obey the behests of the former; otherwise the teacher may not willingly impart all the instruction that the pupil requires. The Veda is intended to lay down the rules of the first kind, to lay down rules for the guidance of man in those matters in which he can never arrive at a knowledge of those rules, without the aid of Revelation, as transcending the reach of his personal experience. In such cases alone we depend entirely on the teaching of the Veda and should literally and implicitly follow the rules therein laid down, if we

wish to attain the results which are said to accrue from the acts recommended, in this world or the next as the case may be. All the rules laid down in the Veda primarily are of this sort. The second class of rules are found in the Smritis, the work of human intellect.

**The marriage law is based on supersensuous experience.**

3. To what category does the marriage ritual laid down in the Shastras belong? To answer this question, we should know what the object is of the marriage ritual prescribed in the Shastras, as distinguished from the result of the sexual union of man and woman not established through such a ritual. This latter kind of sexual union resulting in reproduction is brought about by the sexual instinct implanted in the whole animal creation including man. No Vedic commandment is needed to bring about this event. When the natural instinct impels a man and a woman to unite together for reproduction, the Veda teaches them that if a fine efficient progeny of a highly intellectual, moral and spiritual nature is aimed at, the conjugal relation should be accompanied by the course of life laid down for a householder from the very day of his marriage, and preceded by the preparatory course of life prescribed for the Brahmacharins, the holy order of Vedic students; so that the main immediate object of the Vedic law of marriage is not mere reproduction, but the advance of human evolution by way of bringing about an improved race of

human beings. The ordinary human intellect can never formulate such a rule of life without the teaching of the Shastra. Neither are the promises, vows, wishes and aspirations which are conveyed through the mantras, or the formulas recited by the bridegroom and the bride in the course of the marriage ritual, ever likely to enter their minds if they have not been suggested by those mantras. The expression of these vows, promises, and aspirations, implies and impresses a full sense of the responsibilities and duties pertaining to the life of an ideal householder or citizen, a full sense of the holy life the married couple will have to lead together. Man and woman thus united by the bond of marriage, leading the holy life laid down in the Shastras for the order of householders, reproduce themselves in a race of human beings called Rishis, whose minds can soar beyond flesh and its concomitant feelings and view the world of man from loftier altitudes. It is through such a race of men, possessed of vast powers of clear and piercing vision, that the Vedas have come down to us.

**The primary law of marriage is to be studied in the Veda.**

4. The relation of marriage is thus the most important concern in life and must be entered into in no light spirit, if a progeny has to be brought into being which is to be worthy of the high destiny of the Aryan race to which the Rishis belonged. Prior to entering into this relation, man and woman

should have clearly understood the importance of the sacred life of the householder as laid down in the Veda, and should have fully prepared themselves for that life. With a view to this, let us try to formulate in detail the primary law of marriage as contrasted with the secondary and tertiary laws now in vogue among the Hindus. Where ought we to look up for this primary law? The fountain source of all teaching in regard to matters beyond the reach of the ordinary human intellect is the Veda, as Jaimini says **चोदनालक्षणोऽर्थो धर्मः**. When the Veda fails us, then alone we have to look up to the other sources of law, such as Smriti and custom, constituting together what is called *sampradaya* or tradition (*vide infra* para 14).

**The Mantra and Brahmana sections of the Veda.**

5. The Veda comprises two sections. One section called Brahmana lays down rules in express terms,—in the form "One should do so and so if one desires such and such a result,"—with necessary details, and with such explanations as are calculated to induce a man to follow the rules. The other section comprises mantras, the formulas to be repeated in the course of the ritual, expressing the acts to be done at the time; **अनुष्ठेयार्थस्मारको मन्त्रः**. The mantra does not state a rule expressly in the form "One should do so and so;" it simply describss the act which at the time is to be done by the individual engaged in the performance of the ritual. It is in the form "I do

so and so;" or "O Indra, grant me this prayer;" and so on. So the mantras express the thoughts and aspirations of the person engaged in the ritual, while the external act or acts constituting the ritual form the outward expression, and sometimes the mere symbol, of the person's inward workings. The Brahmana section prescribes the use of mantras in connection with particular acts in the course of a ritual, especially when the connection between a mantra and an act is not quite apparent from the tenor of the mantra itself. But where there is no express Brahmana text prescribing the use of a mantra with reference to an act of ritual, such a connection must be inferred from the tenor of the mantra itself. In fact, the Mimamsakas teach that where a mantra indicates clearly with what act of ritual it should be associated, there is no need for a Brahmana text teaching such a connection. If, on the contrary, there appears in this case a Brahmana text apparently pointing to such a connection, it is said that the main object of the rule is not simply to repeat what the mantra clearly indicates as to its use, but to teach something over and above what the mantra implies.

**The vedic ideal of marriage is to be studied in the Mantras.**

6. Now the Brahmana section of the Veda does not treat of the marriage ritual. But in every one of the four Vedas, there is a separate section embodying the mantras connected with the marriage ritual. It is probable that these mantras were once all self-explanatory, and that therefore

no express directions were needed as to their connection with the several acts of the ritual. It is in these Vedic formulas that we should seek for the Vedic Law of Marriage embodying the original ideal of the status of man and woman at the time of marriage and of the conditions of their married life. We should study the mantras with a view to determine the primary law of marriage from their tenor. If the tradition of the time and the land embodied in the current practices and Smritis (law books) conflict with the rules derived from an independent study of the Vedic mantras which are the primary source of law, the tradition should give way to the paramount authority of the Veda. Such are the time-honored rules laid down for the interpretation of the Vedic texts, and formulated by Jaimini and Badarayana, the two great authors of the Mimamsa, with a view to guide the students in determining the laws laid down in the Shastras. If therefore we wish to ascertain the Vedic Law of Marriage, we should study the mantras connected with the marriage ritual, interpreting them in strict accordance with the principles of the Mimamsa. It is enough for the present purpose to take up a few mantras for study—such mantras as are connected with those parts of the marriage ritual which are common to all schools of the Veda, and without which no marriage is complete. The rules which such a study suggests are binding on all Hindus who recognise the supreme authority of the Veda in matters of religious law.

**The main purpose of marriage and how it is achieved.**

7. Let us study one of the mantras uttered by the bridegroom on meeting the bride in the first act of the marriage ritual. It runs as follows :—

**गृभ्णामि ते सुप्रजास्त्वाय**
**हस्तं मया पत्या जरदष्टिर्यथाऽसः ।**
**भगो आर्यमा सविता पुरंधि-**
**र्मह्यं त्वाऽदुर्गार्हपत्याय देवाः ॥**

"I seize thy hand to have a fine progeny, that thou mayest live with me, thy lord, till thou shalt atttain decay. The Gods—Bhaga, Aryaman, Savitri, and Purandhi—have given thee to me for householdership."

(*Taittiriya Ekagnikanda*, I. *iii*, *3*.)

This mantra is evidently to be recited by the bridegroom holding the hand of the bride, the act of *pâni-grahana* forming a very important part of the marriage ritual. The mantra indicates the main object of marriage, *viz.*, *suprajâstva*, the generation of a fine progeny. This result will accrue from the union of a man and a woman joining together in close companionship for the whole life and duly performing, from the very day of marriage onward, the duties of the householders' life,—duties which they as husband and wife owe to the Gods, to man, and to lower animals. Further, every Aryan has to bear in mind that this holy relation of marriage between a man and a woman of the Arya or cultured class is brought about by

Gods for serving a divine purpose in life, through the married couple discharging their duties as householders. Thus living together in mutual love, and at peace with man and with all beings above and below man, the Aryan man and woman, united together by the bond of marriage, bring forth a progeny worthy of the Aryan race. Again, the bride is addressed thus :—

**वीरसूर्देवकामा स्योना शं नो भव ॥**

"Giving birth to manly children, and devoted to the Gods, be thou conducive to our happiness and well-being."

(*Rig-Veda X, 85, 44.*)

From this we may learn that manliness is one of the fine qualities expected of the children to be brought forth as the issue of the married life. Further, the bride is exhorted to lead a life of devotion to the Gods, which necessarily presupposes a knowledge, on her part, of the nature and functions of the Gods in relation to the world and humanity. When such words are addressed to the bride, she is expected to understand their meaning and spirit and to be able to rise to the level of the husband's aspirations. Surely, all this cannot be expected of a bride whose age is ten years or under. So, according to the Veda, man and woman, when they are about to enter the married life, must be quite mature in mind and body. They should be able to understand and recognise the main object of marriage, as also the conditions of the married life in which that object has to be achieved.

**The bride and the bridegroom are adults meeting as friends on equal footing.**

8. The next important mantra I propose to take up for study is the formula which, after pacing seven steps with the bride, the bridegroom utters, addressing her as follows :—

**सखा सप्तपदा भव, सख्यायो सप्तपदा बभूव, सख्यं ते गमेयं, सख्यात्ते मा योषं, सख्यान्मे मा योष्ठाः । समयाव संकल्पावहै सं प्रियो रोचिष्णू सुमनस्यमानौ । इषमूर्जमभि सं वसानौ सं नौ मनांसि सं व्रता समु चित्तान्याकरम् ॥**

"A friend shalt thou be, having paced these seven steps with me. Nay, having paced together the seven steps, we *have become* friends. May I retain thy friendship, and never part from thy friendship. Let us unite together: let us propose together. Loving each other and ever radiant in each other's company, meaning well towards each other, sharing together all enjoyments and pleasures, let us join together our aspirations, our vows, and our thoughts."

(*Tai. Eka. I, iii, 14.*)

These words addressed by the bridegroom to the bride on the first day of marriage shew that, in the original Vedic ideal, the relation of husband and wife is one of friendship on almost equal terms. They have had each their own thoughts, vows and aspirations; and by marriage, they have to consciously unite them together in harmony, with a view

to bring forth a fine, manly and spiritual progeny and thereby forward the advance of humanity. They have been brought together by the Gods to serve a very important divine purpose in human evolution, as we have already had occasion to show (*vide supra* para 7). Can we expect words such as the above to be addressed at the time of marriage by a boy-bridegroom, or even by an adult bridegroom, to a child-bride, to a girl between four and ten years of age who cannot respond to the call of friendship and co-operation, and to the demand of perfect union in thought and deed? Can the girl understand and realise the full sense of the words thus addressed to her? The further proposal that the bridegroom makes to the bride in this connection clearly indicates that both of them must be adults at the time of marriage. The bridegroom continues his address to the bride as follows : –

**तावेहि संभवाव सह रेतो दधावहै पुंसे पुत्राय वेत्तवै ॥**

"Come now, let us beget; let us place the seed together, that we may attain a male child."—

(*Jaimini Grihya Sutra* 21, 8.)

Thus at the time of the *Sapta-padi* (the ceremony of pacing seven steps) which occurs on the first day of marriage, the bridegroom and the bride are of an age when they are ready to become the parents of children.

**The status of the wife as householder.**

9. Now to pass on to the study of another significant mantra. At the house of the bride's

father the bridegroom has to offer a number of oblations to the fire praying to Gods for their blessings on the marriage and on the bride. In offering one of these oblations, the bridegroom says :—

कन्यला पितृभ्यो यती पतिलोकमव दीक्षामदास्थ ॥

" This maiden, about to pass away from her parents to the husband's home, has ended her vow of maidenhood."—

(*Tai. Eka. I. iv, 4.*)

And further on, he prays to Indra thus :—

प्रेतो मुञ्चाति नामुतः सुबद्धाममुतस्करत् ॥

" Do thou release her hence, but not thence ; there do thou keep her well fixed."

(*Ibid. 5*).

From these two mantras it may be clearly seen that even on the first day of marriage the bride is fit to leave her parents' house for good and to take her abode in the bridegroom's house whence she is never to return to her parents. No infant or child-wife can thus pass away finally from her parents' care to set up a common household with the husband. The bride must be an adult woman who, at the time of her departure from the parents' home on the first day of marriage, may be addressed as follows :—

गृहान् गच्छ गृहपत्नी यथाऽसो ।
वशिनी त्वं विदथमावदासि ॥

" Go to the house, that thou mayst be the lady of the house. As mistress (of the house), thou shalt direct the sacrificial rites."

*Rig-Veda X, 85, 26.*

On the very day of marriage when the bride has to leave her parents' home to take her abode with the husband in their common home, she must be prepared to take charge of the household, well-versed in the household management, and fully conversant with the details of all the sacrificial rites that the householders have daily to go through. This means a previous preparation on her part and a well- devised course of instruction which she has passed through to qualify herself for her future life as wife and mother according to the Aryan ideal. As a matter of fact, the bride has herself to repeat mantras or formulas with a full understanding of their sense, as well as she has to understand the full meaning of the bride-groom's exhortations and promises uttered in the form of mantras. There was, indeed, a time when among the Indo-Aryans women were as well educated as men, when women studied Vedas and sciences as well as men, when women sacrificed on their own account like men both before and after marriage. This becomes clear from the study of a mantra connected with the *lâja-homa* (the oblation of fried grains), the next stage in the marriage ritual. The mantra reads as follows :—

**अर्यमणं नु देवं कन्या अग्निमयक्षत ।**
**स इमां देवो अध्वरः प्रेतो मुञ्चातु नामुतः ॥**

"This maiden worshipped Agni, the God Aryaman. May that gracious God release her hence, but not thence."

(*Tai. Eka. I, v, 7,*)

The maiden who wishes to secure a proper husband has to worship God Aryaman. And this worship is given in detail in the Kausika-Grihyasutra of the Atharva-Veda. The Sankha-yana Grihyasutra of the Rig-Veda speaks of *Indrânî-Karma*, a ritual to be performed by, or on behalf of, the maiden on the eve of her marriage, in which oblations are offered to Gods and Goddesses, including Aryaman. From this it is clear that women offered sacrificial worship on their own account, independently of men. The co-operation of man and woman is necessary in some sacrificial rites only, but not in all. The tie of marriage enables a man and a woman to offer a conjoint worship to the Gods, and the benefit of this conjoint worship is stated in the words of the following mantras addressed to the bride in this connection :—

धातुश्च योनौ सुकृतस्य लोके
स्योनं ते सह पत्या करोमि ॥

"In the home of the Creator, in the region (attained as the result) of the meritorious deed, I secure for thee a place of blessedness with thy husband." (*Ibid*. 16.)

The wife has an equal share with the husband in the merit of their conjoint worship. By a proper discharge of their duties as joint householders, the married couple attain to highest heaven, after death, enjoying there a heavenly bliss in mutual love and company. Equal share in the benefits of a joint act implies equal efficiency as a co-operator in the act. A little later on, when the

bride is about to take charge of the common household, she is addressed as follows :—

**संराज्ञी श्वशुरे भव संराज्ञी श्वश्रुवां भव ।**
**ननान्दरि संराज्ञो भव संराज्ञी अधि देवृषु ॥**

"Be thou a loving queen (in the house) to the father-in-law, a loving queen to the mother-in-law, a loving queen to the sister-in-law, a loving queen to the brothers-in-law."

(*Rig-Veda X, 85. 46.*)

So, when the married couple are settled in their common household, the wife becomes the mistress of the house. The husband's father, mother, sisters and brothers, if they happen to live with them, are only the dependants of the married couple and are to be treated lovingly by them with respectful consideration and kindness.

**Woman's duties as householder, wife and mother.**

10. On entering the house, the bride is addressed as follows :—

**इह प्रियं प्रजया ते समृध्यता-**
**मस्मिन् गृहे गार्हपत्याय जागृहि ।**
**एना पत्या तन्वं संसृज-**
**स्वाथा जीव्री विदथमावदासि ॥**

"May thy joy increase here through offspring. Be thou ever awake here in this house for thy duty as householder. With this, thy husband, do thou join thy body ; and as thou advancest in age, thou shalt teach the sacrificial law."—

(*Ibid. 27.*)

Here the bride is reminded of the responsibilities of the married life. It is wished that she may beget such children as will be a source of joy to her. She has to be ever watchful in the performance of the duties which she, as a householder, owes to Gods, men and lower animals. She is told that the bond of marriage uniting them together has to be completed by conjugal embrace. Finally, as she advances in age, she will have to teach the sacrificial law to her children and grandchildren.. This office of the mother as a spiritual teacher of her children has an important significance, which will be dealt with in the sequel (para 15). Such are the responsibilities which devolve on the female partner in life from the day of marriage to the time of death.

**Mutual understanding between the bride and the bridegroom is necessary.**

11. When they have taken their abode in the common home, they begin their married life with a vow of celibacy for a period of one, three or more nights. The power of self-restraint in the midst of temptation, which they have acquired in the student-life, is exercised by them by refraining for a period of time from sexual intercourse while at the same time they share a common bed. On the night following this period, when they are about to begin conjugal intercourse, the bride addresses the bridegroom in the following words :—

अपश्यं त्वा मनसा चेकितानं
तपसो जातं तपसो विभूतम् ।

इह प्रजामिह रयिं रराणः
प्रजायस्व प्रजया पुत्रकाम ॥

"In heart I have known thee as one knowing (my mind), thee who hast had thy birth in *tapas* (self-restraint) and who art enriched with *tapas*. Investing me here with progeny and wealth, do thou reproduce thyself through our offspring, thou who art desirous of progeny.—(*Tai. Eka. I, xi, 1.*)

The bridegroom thus responds :

अपश्यं त्वा मनसा दीध्यानां
स्वायां तनूं ऋत्वियें नाथमानाम् ।
उप मामुच्चा युवतिर्बभूयाः
प्रजायस्व प्रजया पुत्रकामे ॥

"In heart I have known thee who art deep in thought, seeking impregnation in thy body; do thou, a mature woman, enjoy my embrace and reproduce thyself through our offspring, desirous as thou art of progeny." (*Ibid. 2.*)

This address of the bride and the response of the bridegroom are both very significant. In the first place the bridegroom describes the bride as *Yuvati* a mature and fully developed woman, who desires offspring and is ready to beget offspring. In her address, the bride approvingly refers to the mutual understanding existing between her and the bridegroom and appreciates the merit of her life-partner as one who was born of well disciplined parents

and who himself has been thoroughly disciplined. By declaring thus openly her appreciation of this last qualification in her life-partner, she implies also that she herself is not wanting in it. In fact, they have proved their possession of this power of self-control amidst temptation by sharing one and the same bed for some nights without conjugal intercourse. Further, the bride's address clearly voices forth her aspiration that the child to be born of their union shall be an Aryan child, a child of *tapas*, not of mere sensual lust. Thus the closing act of the marriage ritual, as laid down in the traditional ritualistic works called Grihya-Sutras, is a clear proof that, according to the Vedas, marriage is a sacred human relation entered into by a man and a woman who have attained full maturity in body and mind, both anxious to beget offspring, and both aware of each other's thoughts and aspirations.

**The Vedic ideal of marriage.**

12. This rapid survey of a few of the mantras connected with the marriage ritual leads to the conclusion that the marriage relation should be entered into by a man and a woman at a mature age, when they may be fully alive to the responsibilities of the householder's life, both of them having been duly educated for a proper discharge of their duties. Such is the conclusion one will arrive at by an independent study of the Vedic texts in accordance with the principles of interpretation laid down by Jaimini and Badarayana, the

authors of the Mimamsa, and recognised by all Vedic interpreters and all writers on the sacred laws of the Hindus.

**The Smritis opposed to the Vedic ideal.**

13. There are no doubt texts in the Smritis, including the Smriti of Manu, opposed to this conclusion. In the Smritis, the Vedic ideal of marriage, especially regarding the status of woman, is but partially held up. Even the Kalpa-sutras,—comprising Shrauta, Grihya, and Dharma sections,—do not quite come up to the Vedic ideal of the status of woman. The Grihya-Sutras, which profess to record the practice of the marriage ritual as current at the time of their composition, lay down detailed rules connected with the practice of the marriage ritual. The status of woman at the time of marriage as laid down in the Grihya-Sutras comes up nearer the Vedic ideal than that found in the Smritis, though it falls short of that ideal in some particulars. The Vedic ideal for instance, represents the man and the woman entering on married life as fully mature, as having been equally well educated, as having equally studied the Veda and observed the Vedic ritual, as fully competent to discharge their respective duties pertaining to the married life. The Sutras, not excepting the Mimamsa Sutras of Jaimini, qualify this by laying down that no woman has a right to study the Veda and to offer sacrificial worship indenpendently of man, though she is to engage in the Vedic ritual along with her husband and has even to recite mantras in the course of the ritual,

being entitled to an equal share in the spiritual benefit accruing from the ritual. The Manu-Smriti has introduced further disabilities in the case of women. Marriage has been made compulsory for women except in very rare cases. Early marriage has been recommended for girls, and it has resulted in the absence of intellectual education and all training for the responsible duties of a householder's life on the part of the female partner. It is enjoined as a duty of the parents to get their daughter married as soon in life as possible before her attaining the age of puberty. In exceptional cases alone, the parents have been given the option of delaying her marriage till after her attainment of the age of puberty, or of keeping her unmarried all life. A daughter is given the option of herself choosing the husband only when left unmarried by her guardians for three years after her attaining the age of puberty. One of the latest Smritis, that of Parasara, insists, on the other hand, that a girl should be married at ten or earlier, declaring that an unmarried girl above ten years is on a par with a Shudra girl and is not fit for a brahmin to marry.*

**The Vedic Law should replace the traditional practice.**

14. When the practice advocated by the Smriti and the unwritten custom conflicts with the Vedic Law, the latter should be held up as authoritative in preference to the Smriti and the custom. The Vedic Law is based on the absolute truth which reveals itself to the unbiassed minds of the Rishis, whereas the Smritis are only records

of rules based on empirical generalisations, and of conventional practices (*samayacharas*) current at the time of their composition, and are therefore not of equal authority with the Vedas. Where the Smriti teaches a law which cannot be discovered by ordinary human intellect and which is not opposed to the express teaching of the Veda, there alone the Smriti is held as an authority in matters beyond the reach of human intellect. Even in this case, the Smriti as such conveys no primary authority with it, its authority resting on a supposed Vedic text which originally taught the law, but which is now lost to us, though the author of the Smriti or his teacher might have had access to it. The laws based on empirical truths and social conventions, which are the subject-matter proper of the Smritis, as lying outside the scope of the Vedas, are liable to change and capable of improvement, as science advances and social environments change. It is such laws mostly that are embodied in the Achara and Vyavahara Kandas of the Smritis, and they vary with the land and the time of the people for whom they were originally intended and among whom they were in force. There are some conventional rules laid down in the Smriti or sanctioned by custom, which have no basis in the Veda and Science and are even opposed to them, being traceable to error, considerations of expediency, lust, pride, or prejudice as the case may be. These rules should be rescinded as soon as their true origin is known. It is incumbent on us thus to distinguish the

various classes of rules laid down in the Smritis or sanctioned by the unwritten custom, with a view to remove the causes which retard progress or tend to degeneration. Applying this principle to the question of marriage, we find that it is necessary to revert to the Vedic Law of marriage, seeing that all deviations from it have been due to considerations of expediency or some deleterious influences working on human weakness.

**Neglect of female education led to early marriage.**

15. Now it may be asked, to what cause or causes is due the deviation from the Vedic Law of adult marriage to the girl and child marriages of the Smriti and custom? The answer to this question is contained in what has been stated above. It is due to a change in the status of woman. The woman of the Veda was well educated and had equal opportunities with man for intellectual, moral and spiritual culture and developement. There were then female saints and sages, as also female Rishis or authors of Vedic hymns. The woman ceased to be so well educated as man at or before the time of the composition of the Sutras as may be seen from the rule therein laid down that no woman should formally study the Veda; so that this change in the educational status of woman took place some three or four thousand years ago. This was exactly the period when the degeneration of the Indo-Aryan race commenced. Writing about this period, Apastamba says that the age of Rishis, of men to whom

Vedic Laws based on absolute truth revealed themselves, has passed away : **ऋषयोऽवरेषु न जायन्ते** (I, v, 4). When women were equally well-educated with men and had equal rights to spiritual culture and knowledge, then they gave birth to Rishis, to that fine manly intellectual and spiritual race of men and women. To cite another witness. Referring with some approbation to the instruction given to King Janaka by a number of spiritual teachers, the sage Yajnavalkya (*vide* Brihadaranayaka-Up. IV, i, 2) praises every one of those teachers as one who must have had a worthy mother, a worthy father, and a worthy master. This shews that the mother had a share in the intellectual and spiritual training of her children. Shri Madhvacharya (*vide* his commentary on Brahma-sutras I, i, 1) quotes from Vyoma-Samhita* to say that the wives of the Rishis have a right to study the Veda and to practise the worship taught therein. Even so

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* The passage quoted reads as follows :—

**आहुरप्युत्तमस्त्रीणामाधिकारं तु वैदिके ।**
**यथोर्वशी यमी चैव शच्याद्याश्च तथाऽपराः ॥**

"It is also declared that even Vedic culture is open to highest women, such as Urvasi, Yami, Shachi, etc., as also others." These 'others' comprise women Munis (Rishis) such as Gargi and Maitreyi, and human incarnations of celestial women such as Krishna (Draupadi), as taught in the Bharata Tatparya-nirnaya (XXIX, 37-38) :—

**वेदा अप्युत्तमस्त्रीभिः कृष्णाद्याभिरिवाखिलाः ।**
**देव्यो मुनिस्त्रियश्चैव नरादिकुलजा अपि ॥**
**उत्तमा इति विज्ञेयाः . . . . . ॥**

recent a writer as Madhava quotes, in his commentary on the Parasara-Smriti (*vide* Vol. II, pp. 82-84, Bombay Ed.), from Harita and Yama, passages which tell us that in a former age women studied the Vedas as well as men, and that some of them remained celibates, and became Brahmavadins, engaged in studying and teaching the Vedas and devoted to the contemplation of Brahman. The discontinuance of a proper education in the case of women, originally due to the parental neglect or to some temporary untoward circumstances in the social and political condition of the people, has become a recognised feature of the status of woman, and led to the girl and child marriages recommended by Smriti and custom. Excluded from all education, woman is now held as fit only for a dependent life. During the period when a girl, as much as a boy, should be educated and trained for the future responsible life of a householder under the strict regimen of *Brahmacharya* (the disciplinary life of the Vedic student), she has in these days nothing to do but play or drudge in the father's household. Such a girl cannot, in the nature of things, be allowed to grow to an adult age without marriage, as she is not likely to know how to guard and protect herself. On the contrary, a boy who has all chances of receiving the highest education is allowed to grow unprotected, as his education will enable him to guard and protect himself. Laying down laws for the guidance of the Hindu society in which women have been denied all chances of a

complete education, the Smritis have recommended, nay insisted, that girls should be married as soon as possible before their attaining the age of puberty. And it is easy to guess how the early marriage in the case of girls leads to early marriage in the case of boys, despite the ordinances of the Smritis to the contrary; their term of *Brahmacharya* is thus shortened, and they take too soon to a life of ease and luxury. The result is a great fall from the fine, vigorous spiritual manhood of the ancient Aryan race.

**Education on the line of ancient Brahmacharya is necessary for boys and girls.**

16. This enquiry into the cause of the change from the Vedic Law of adult marriage to the early marriage of the Smriti and custom is suggestive of the line of reform to be adopted to bring about our social regeneration. The revival of education, in the case of boys as well as girls, subject to the rules of *Brahmacharya*, the ancient institution of student-life,—adapted, of course, to our modern environment with necessary changes,—will enable us to revert to the wholesome Law of adult marriage, which, as I have shown above, is the primary law of marriage laid down for us by Vedas, the highest authority. The offspring of such marriages will be a manly and vigorous race of humanity like the early Aryans who gave birth to the ancient civilization of India. By a universal adoption of this ancient institution of brahmacharya may be brought about the resuscitation of our national vigour which is almost dead. It was

this rigorous discipline that produced the Brahmarshis and Rajarshis of the ancient India, such sages of lofty wisdom and mighty power as Vasishtha and Vishvamitra, Yajnavalkya and Janaka, Khandikya and Keshidhvaja ; and likewise it is a thorough neglect of this discipline which has made us the ease-loving and custom-ridden people we are, living upon the traditions of a past civilization. The penalties of its neglect and the merit of a due observance of its rules are stated in Apastamba's Dharma-Sutras (I, v, 1–8) as follows:—

नियमेषु तपश्शब्दः । तदतिक्रमे विद्याकर्म निस्स्रवति ब्रह्म सहापत्यादेतस्मात् । कर्तपत्यमनायुष्यं च । तस्माद्दषयोऽवरेषु न जायन्ते नियमातिक्रमात् । श्रुतर्षयस्तु भवन्ति केचित् कर्मफलशेषेण पुनस्संभवे । यथा श्वेतकेतुः । यत् किंच समाहितोऽब्रह्माप्याचार्यादुपयुङ्क्ते ब्रह्मवदेव तस्मिन् फलं भवति । अथो यत् किंच मनसा वाचा चक्षुषा वा संकल्पयन् ध्यायत्याहाभिविपश्यति वा तथैव तद्भवतीत्युपदिशन्ति ॥

"To the vows (of brahmacharya) is applied the term *Tapas*. By transgression thereof, knowledge, energy, and spirituality flow away from him (the student) as well as his progeny, followed by a fall into the abyss and a shortened life ; so that no Rishis are born among the modern people because of the transgression of the vows (of brahmacharya). If any are born again as a result of their past acts, they become Rishis by learning, like Shwetaketu. Whatever a well-disciplined

student learns from the teacher, though it be not the Veda, it yields the fruit like the Veda itself. Nay more ; whatever he wills and then thinks of by the mind, or utters by the tongue, or sees by the eye, even so it becomes. So they teach."

The introduction of this unique ancient discipline into the modern educational system will undo many of the evils associated with it and improve the physique as well as the moral and spiritual tone of the youth of both sexes. The modern orthodox Hindu whose conscience is governed by the laws of the Smritis and unwritten custom may no doubt demur to the proposal of extending the discipline to the early training of girls; but it should be borne in mind that without improving the physical, intellectual as well as moral and spiritual culture of women we can never hope to win back the ancient vigor of our race. It was the early wilful neglect and the later statutory prohibition of female education that sowed the early seed of deterioration which has grown to the mighty tree whose bitter fruits we are now reaping in such abundance. As intellectual and spiritual discipline and culture was withheld from women by legal ordinance, as married life took for the girls the place of student-life by statute, as the infant and child marriages of girls and early marriages of boys followed as a necessary consequence, we have lost nearly all our national vigour. To encourage, therefore, the modern orthodox Hindu to take this important

and necessary step on the path of our national progress, and to add force to my recommendation based on an independent study of the Veda which, as I have shewn already, ordains that women as well as men should be well-educated and trained for their respective duties prior to their marriage, I would now quote Harita's ordinances (XXI. 20—23) as regards the early training of girls :

न शूद्रसमाः स्त्रियः । न हि शूद्रयोनौ ब्राह्मण-क्षत्रिय-वैश्या जायन्ते । तस्माच्छन्दसा स्त्रियः संस्कार्याः । तासां द्विविधो विकल्पः, ब्रह्मवादिन्यः सद्योद्वहाश्चेति । ब्रह्मवादिनीनामुपनयनमग्निसंस्कारः स्वगृहेऽध्ययनं भैक्ष्यचर्या च । प्राप्तौ रजसः समावर्तनम् । अतिरिक्तेऽप्रधानम् । सद्योऽपध्वंसनं वा ॥

"Women are not on a level with the Shudras ; for, from the womb of a Shudra there cannot be born a Brahmana, or a Kshatriya, or a Vaishya. Hence should all sacramental rites for women be conducted with the Vedic texts. Among women, there is a two-fold distinction, those who study the Veda and those who marry at once. As to the students of the Veda, Upanayana, service to the Sacred Fire, Vedic study at home, and eating of the food obtained by begging, these are enjoined ; and cessation (of the vows shall take place) on attaining the age of puberty. In the case of the rest, (these vows are) not essential or cease immediately."

Harita stands alone among the Sutrakaras in thus laying down rules of Brahmacharya and Vedic study with special reference to the women of the twice-born classes, whereas all other Sutrakaras exclude women from Upanayana, Vedic study and an independent performance of Vedic sacrificial rites. Madhava and other modern exegetists have quoted these ordinances of Harita,—but only in part, and that not in his own words,—and have interpreted them as applicable to a former Yuga dating many thousands of years back, or (according to some bolder interpreters) to a former Kalpa dating some billions and trillions of years back, relying on the statement of Yama, a later Smritikara, who speaks of the ordinances as having been in vogue in *pura-kalpa* (*Vide infra* Ch. II, para 8). Harita does not give us to understand that he is recording the effete statutes of a former Yuga or Kalpa ; on the contrary, he insists on the observance of the laws he lays down, giving some cogent reasons for his view. Neither can it be said that Harita himself lived in a former Yuga or Kalpa ; for he is cited by Apastamba as one of the contemporary Acharyas, not as one who lived in a former Yuga ; and in fact Harita's Dharmashastra containing the ordinances quoted above is now extant. It may be that his ordinances were in vogue in a remote period, not very far removed from Apastamba's age, though that period may have been considerably anterior to Yama, who could therefore speak of the ordinances like those quoted above as pertaining to a *pura-kalpa*, as

having been in vogue only in a former period. Whatever be the age of Harita, his ordinances are in accord with the teaching of the Vedas and are therefore worthy of our allegiance, in preference to the later deviations which may be traced to the growing lassitude of the people at large. From Harita's words we may even infer that by his time the tide of progress had already turned back and that he had to fight for a losing cause against terrible odds, all in vain as the events have proved. The education and discipline of women became neglected in spite of Harita's protest that no woman akin to a slave and devoid of culture could give birth to a true noble Aryan. If we, therefore, wish to rekindle the dying embers of Aryan spirituality and vigor, we should wake ourself up from the spell of lethargy which has long stupefied us and strive to re-establish the reign of the Vedic law of marriage and education.

**An urgent need for reform.**

17. This is the conclusion to which our investigation has led. Unless we recognise the present low state of our society as contrasted with our ancient progressive civilization, and unless we soon introduce such reforms into our social institutions as are calculated to bring about our regeneration, there will be no salvation for us, the Hindus, as a race. We should try and remove all causes of our degeneration. Whatever encrustations have gathered themselves in the lapse of time round our social fabric, we should carefully scrape them away. The work of reform

that lies before us is a gigantic one. A Shankaracharya is needed to liberate the pure Vedic ideal of social institutions like marriage from the pernicious influences of evil customs which are eating into the vitals of our society. What Shri Shankaracharya is said to have done for the religion and philosophy of the Upanishad, for the Jnana-kanda of the Veda, by freeing the popular religious systems of the day from the pernicious influences of the Smritis and Agamas—the scriptures of the Bhairava, Shakta, Saura, Ganapatya and other non-Vedic cults and systems of philosophy—and by giving them a broad basis in the pure philosophy of the Upanishad, the same thing has to be done for the restoration of the Vedic Law of marriage by putting an end to the un-Vedic custom of early marriage among all classes of Hindus. Shri Shankaracharya is said to have worked strenuously to remove abuses from the popular religion of his day and succeeded at last in freeing it from the non-Vedic abominable practices introduced into it by self-seeking religious teachers who taught many revolting rites as recommended in the Tantras for an easy acquisition of wonder-working physical powers. An equally strenuous effort is needed on the part of the leaders of our society to expose the errors and abuses which have insidiously crept into the institution of marriage, eating into the vitals of our society and tending to our decay as a nation, and to restore as soon as possible the full sway of the Vedic Law of marriage based on absolute truth.

**Closing words.**

18. This is a brief statement of the Vedic Law of marriage and of the reform suggested by a close study thereof. The very brevity of the statement may give rise to many questions for which answers may not be found readily here. I am myself aware that the objections which the advocates of the present system of marriage may raise against the views set forth above require a full and separate treatment. To answer all these questions and objections, I have to expound my theme at a greater length, laying before the public all the materials I have had at my disposal and showing how a judicious consideration of those materials necessarily leads to the conclusions I have arrived at. It may, however, be stated that in the present statement, brief as it is, I have laid open the groundwork of my theme and suggested answers to the objections that are commonly raised agaist the view set forth here.

# CHAPTER II.

## Another Version of the Vedic Law of Marriage.

### Section I.—"*The Aryan Vedic Law of Marriage*" by *Dewan Bahadur R. Ragoonatha Rao.*

[After reading my foregoing address to the Aryadharmojjivini Sabha of Mysore published in the *Mysore Herald*, Dewan Bahadur R. Ragoonath Rao sent to the same journal for publication the following brief statement of his version of the Vedic Law on Marriage, to shew, as against my view, how the Smritis can be reconciled with the Shruti, which ordains marriage between adult men and women.]

**The gift of a virgin girl.**

1. "The students of Hindu law on marriage should distinctly understand that the gift of a virgin and her marriage are entirely different acts. The gift of a virgin by her guardian is an act of the latter transferring his ownership called *Swamyam* to the receiver, that is, whatever rights he had over her to the receiver. Manu says (Ch. V. 25), 'the gift is the cause of ownership.' प्रदानं स्वाम्यकारणम् The receiver becomes thereby possessed of all the rights over the virgin, which her guardian had. In the current practice, too, the guardian after making the gift is dismissed and has nothing to do in the marriage ceremonies. In olden

times, much time used to intervene between the gift and the marriage ceremonies, in which the guardian took no part, but was even absent. The gift by a Brahman is good by pouring water (Manu III, 35).

**Marriage.**

2. "The marriage is an act by two adults of different sexes, which consists of examination of each other as to the competency of the parties to engage in a solemn contract entered into in the presence of fire, (personified as the last spiritual owner of the bride), to be one in all matters of wealth and desires in this world. Having entered into this spiritual contract, the bridegroom takes his intended wife to his mansion and introduces his relatives to her and exhorts her to treat them with respect, attention, and affection. The pair continue very close to each other from the night of the day of the marriage contract for three nights, leading a life of celibacy. This is perhaps another trial to see whether they are fit to be married and become one or not. If everything goes on right, on the fourth night or on any subsequent suitable night, they marry, that is, unite together and become one in Pinda, Gotra and Sutaka. The wife no longer belongs to her father's gotra but becomes one of the husband's gotra.

**Different rules for gift and marriage.**

3. "Thus it will be seen that gift and marriage are two distinctly different acts of different parties: the rules for the one are different from those of the other. The former should not be applied to the latter but viewed as quite independent of the other.

**The reason for early gift.**

4. "A lascivious virgin naturally wishes to associate with a male. Nothing should be done to prevent the gratification of her strong wishes, for she would not wait to be given away to a male by her guardian. This wish often arises only after her menstruation, and it is the duty of her guardian to see that, while her wishes should be gratified, she would be prevented from making improper and unsuitable alliance. He should, therefore, enable her to gratify her wishes by alliance with a proper consort. He should therefore nominate a husband for her with whom she might unite. A gift therefore of her before such a wish springs in her is a precautionary measure.

**Different ages for gift and marriage.**

5. "In order to have the benefit of a kanya-danam, she cannot be given away before she is ten years old, when alone she becomes a kanya according to the Smritis. The possible time of such a gift commences from her eleventh

year. From that time, she may be given away. But the marriage is her own action and it can only take place lawfully after her spiritual gift by Agni. But his ownership of her commences after her breasts are developed. This takes place after menstruation and is so stated by the Smritis. Therefore the time for the gift of the human owner is different from that of the final spiritual owner; the former commences from the eleventh year of a female and the latter some considerable time afterwards. The time of marriage is subsequent to the gift of the spiritual owner Agni.

6. "Such is the Aryan Vedic Law on marriage."

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## SECTION II.—*My examination of the foregoing version of the Vedic Law of Marriage.*

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[This review appeared in the *Mysore Herald* along with the forgoing version.]

**Objection to the theory.**

7. I feel unable to endorse fully Dewan Bahadur R. Ragoonath Rao's statement, as given above, of the "Aryan Vedic Law on Marriage," for two reasons. *Firstly*, it is not based on proper authority, involving assumptions not warranted by the Smriti or the Shruti and even opposed to their express teaching. *Secondly*, his doctrine, regarded

on its own merits, apart from the sanction of the recognised authorities, cannot commend itself to those who seek to eradicate the mischievous notions now prevailing among us as to the main object of marriage, and to pave the way for the social regeneration of the Indo-Aryans.

**The true meaning of the early gift.**

8. I shall proceed to show how the doctrine referred to is opposed to the Shastras. The Dewan Bahadur's ideas of Kanyadana and marriage are opposed to the express teaching of the Shruti and the Smriti. He says that, by the gift of the girl, the father or other guardian transfers his or her ownership and all rights over the girl to the receiver. On the other hand, it will be more in accordance with the spirit of the Smritis,—and no doubt it will be doing greater justice, as giving due credit, to the humanity and humaneness of our law-givers,—to say that by the gift of the girl the father or other guardian transfers to the receiver the responsibilities and duties he or she owes to the girl. The idea that the father owns the girl and has any rights over her is a remnant of the long by-gone barbarous state of humanity wherein physical might was the sole factor that determined the mutual relations of the individual members of the human society. The Aryan law-givers have risen far above such ideas. Strictly speaking, "Swamyam" does not here mean ownership conferring rights properly so-called; it means responsibility and guardianship, involving certain well-defined obligations; and certainly the

two are not identical conceptions. If we remember that the Manu-Smriti (*Vide infra* Ch. III, para 4) and all other writings of the same class unanimously declare that marriage is for a girl what Upanayana is for a boy, we may see that by the gift of the girl the father transfers his responsibilities to the shoulders of the receiver, *i. e.*, the husband. Whatever duties and responsibilities as to the early education and training of the girl rested on the shoulders of her father, or the uncle, or the elder brother, in the golden era of the Vedic Aryans, these have been transferred to the husband by the act of gift, which is soon followed by the more binding ritual called marriage. The ancient Aryan girls, as we are told, had to study the Vedas equally with the boys; but the girls had to be taught only by the father, the paternal uncle, or the brother, as witness the following passages quoted from Yama in the modern exegetical works:

पुराकल्पे कुमारीणां मौञ्जीबन्धनमिष्यते ।
अध्यापनं च वेदानां सावित्रीवचनं तथा ॥
पिता पितृव्यो भ्राता वा नैनामध्यापयेत्परः ॥

"In a former age, Upanayana was allowed to girls, and also the study of the Vedas and the utterance of the Gayatri. Let the father, or the father's brother, or her own brother teach the girl; but none else."

Later on, when, probably owing to a great keenness of struggle for physical existence entailing very serious changes in the economic condition of the

Indo-Aryan society, a redistribution of labour was effected, the girl ceased to be taught the Vedas and Sciences; and the period of her studentship which had formerly preceded marriage was replaced by one of service and tutelage with the husband. In the ancient Vedic Indo-Aryan society, man and woman had equal opportunities in early life for moral, intellectual and spiritual culture, and met on terms of equality as friends at the time of marriage, when they proposed to spend their remaining life together, with a view to discharge the duties of their respective responsible life by mutual help and co-operation. On the contrary, in the present age when the ordinances embodied in the Smritis are in vogue, girls are altogether excluded from all secular and religious education which is entirely reserved for boys, and are ordained by law-givers to lead always a life of dependence. The father, being thus relieved of the responsibility of educating the daughter, should hand her over to a man who in his opinion will be to her in early life a proper teacher of her daily round of duties and a worthy guardian of her moral and spiritual well-being, and in later life a worthy partner in their joint life as householders. This is why Manu and other authors of the Smritis insist on a great disparity of age between the husband and the wife at the time of marriage, the former being thrice as old as the latter. The husband who, by the time of marriage, should have received a sound intellectual and spiritual culture, who has been trained to exercise

self-control, and who, as ordained in the Shastras, seeks marriage more for the purpose of serving God and humanity than for the satisfaction of the animal passion, fills in the first part of the joint life the role of the teacher to the girl-wife, and in the fulness of time fills also the role of the protector, adviser and life-companion to the woman. Thus we see that the idea of gift of the girl as contemplated by the authors of the Smritis is different from that enunciated by the Dewan Bahadur. He has ignored altogether the educational aspect of the question and so missed the one prominent factor which has influenced the course of legislation in civil and religious matters in the Vedic (or ancient) and the Post-Vedic (or modern) periods of the history of the Indo-Aryan community. Low as the modern ideals of married life may be in comparison with those of the ancient (Vedic) period, we may safely assert that no very evil results such as we see to-day would have accrued if the people had more loyally obeyed the injunctions of the Smritis, as regards the early education of men prior to marriage.

**The true meaning of marriage.**

9. Next, the Dewan Bahadur's idea of marriage and its consummation is opposed to the teaching of the Smritis. He says (*vide supra* para 4, especially at its close) that marriage consists essentially in the sexual union which is to take place on the fourth night of the period of the marriage ritual, and that marriage is not complete without the physical act of sexual intercourse. This is to make marriage a

mere physical union instead of a moral and spiritual harmony. But Manu holds that marriage is complete with the Sapta-Padi, the cermony which consists in the bridegroom seizing the hand of the bride and pacing seven steps together, proposing to unite their vows and aspirations in life and setting a seal upon the proposal by an appeal to the Gods, invoking their blessings on the projected union. Accordingly Manu says (VIII, 227):

पाणिग्रहणिका मन्त्रा नियतं दारलक्षणम् ।
तेषां निष्ठा तु विज्ञेया विद्वद्भिः सप्तमे पदे ॥

"The Mantras of Pani-grahana (the seizing of the hand) are the unfailing mark of wifehood. Let the learned know that these Mantras are completed on pacing the seventh step."

This ceremony of the *Sapta-Padi* takes place on the first day of marriage; and it is said in some Smritis that by this ceremony the girl becomes one with the husband in *Gotra* and *Pinda*. Thus according to Manu it is the mutual contract of joint action in all concerns of human life, attested to by the Gods invoked at the time, which constitutes the inseparable bond of marriage. What follows the Sapta-Padi in the marriage ritual constitutes a supplement to it or the first instalment of their life-long duties in their joint life, so that, failure in the observance thereof entails no dissolution of

their union. The physical act of sexual intercourse which, according to the Grihya-Sutras, formulating the older custom of adult marriage, was to take place on the fourth night after the *pani-grahana*, formed no essential part of the marriage ritual. The sexual intercourse on the fourth night was quite optional. What actually happened was that on the fourth night the newly married couple were released from their vow of celibacy (Brahmacharya, a life of regulated diet and constant mutual company without conjugal intercourse) and left to themselves. Unless either of them was impelled by lust, the sexual intercourse was postponed till the next season (*ritu*) for impregnation (Garbhadhana) arrived, when it was the bounden duty of both to unite sexually for the fulfilment of one of the main objects of their holy joint life, namely the begetting of a noble offspring. That this physical union which took place at the proper season for impregnation, or prior to it on the fourth night after *pani-grahana*, the marriage proper, was regarded as no essential part of marriage—not to say that it did not constitute marriage itself—is shewn by the fact that some of the Grihya-Sutras do not refer to it at all, while, of those which speak of it, a few regard it unnecessary to repeat any Mantras in connection with it and therefore look upon it as no part of the sacrament. Strictly speaking, the three nights' brahmacharya (a vow of self-restraint) prior to sexual intercourse forms a part of another sacrament, of the ritual connected with impregnation, *garbhadhana-samskara*. Under the Vedic Law

of adult marriage, the sacrament of *garbhadhana* ought to immediately follow pani-grahana, the marriage proper; and as a preparation therefor or as a part of that sacrament, the newly married couple has to observe a vow of brahmacharya, of self-control amidst temptation, for a certain period. This period extends from the minimum of one night (according to some) or three nights (according to others) to the maximum of one year; the longer the period, the better is the issue of the union taking place after it. Accordingly the issue of impregnation preceded by such preparatory brahmacharya of the married couple for one night, three nights, twelve nights, one month, four months, six months, and one year, are said to be respectively an ordinary Brahmana, a Shrotriya, an Anuchana, a Rishi-kalpa, a Bhruna, a Rishi, and a Deva, possessing higher and higher capacities for the acquisition of spiritual knowledge (*vide* Bodhayana-Grihya-Sutra I, vii, 1-21). Now we see how appropriate are the mantras (quoted on page 17) with which, on the completion of the vow of brahmacharya and when about to begin the act of impregnation, the bride and the bridegroom address each other, expressing their inward aspirations as well as their mutual appreciation and understanding.

**The Smriti enjoins marriage before puberty.**

10. Another point in the Dewan Bahadur's version is in conflict with the teaching of the

smritis. He says that in older times much time used to intervene between the gift and the marriage proper. On the contrary, it seems that in the olden times, the gift, though a preliminary to the marriage proper as it is now, used to be followed by the marriage proper after a very short interval, if not immediately. The Grihya-Sutras are not quite clear as to the interval; but it is clear that the interval was not quite very long, at least not so long as the Dewan Bahadur would seem to suppose. In the Vedic practices as recorded in these Sutras, the gift formed no very important part of the marriage ceremonial; or, it may be, it formed no part of it at all, since some of the Grihya-Sutras do not refer to it at all, while of those which do, a few do not prescribe any mantras in connection with it. But, as it can be easily shewn (*vide* Ch. III, para 32) that, according to the older ritual as recorded in the Grihya-Sutras, the gift as well as the marriage proper took place after the girl attained the age of puberty, the existence or non-existence of a long or short interval between the two acts did not then signify anything. It does, however, signify much in the case of the current laws on marriage embodied in the Smritis which lay down the general rule that girls should be married before puberty. Now the Dewan Bahadur thinks that a considerable time may intervene between the two acts, the marriage proper taking place after the girl has attained puberty. This is opposed to the Smritis. They one and all condemn the man who,

under normal circumstances, has kept his daughter **असंस्कृता,** *i.e.*, without Samskara or sacrament, till she arrives at the age of puberty. Now the act of mere gift, which, according to the Dewan Bahadur, ought not to take place before the eleventh year and which may in some cases precede the age at which the physical change called *rajo-darsana* occurs, cannot constitute that sacrament which should take place before the age of puberty; for the Smritis * clearly distinguish between *dana* and *samskara* in this connection, the latter being essentially a Vedic ritual, a ritual accompanied with the recitation of mantras. Such a sacrament for a girl is marriage (*vivaha*), but no other ceremony prior to it (*vide* Manu II, 67). In the enumeration of the forty Samskaras necessary for the twice-born, Gautama does not refer to the gift as a Samskara, but mentions one with the designation of **सहधर्मचारिणीसंयोगः**, 'union of a man with a woman who can co-operate with him in the observance of the Vedic rituals.' Such a relation is established not by the gift, but by the Vedic ceremonies ending with the Sapta-padi. But the gift has become a necssary preliminary to the Vedic rite of the marriage proper, because in these days of

* As for instance the following verses quoted by Vaidyanatha in the Ashaucha section, from Marichi and Shankha respectively :—

वारिपूर्वं प्रदत्ता या या नैव प्रतिपादिता ।
असंस्कृता सा विज्ञेया त्रिरात्रमुभयोः समम् ॥
प्रत्ताप्रत्तासु योषित्सु संस्कृतासंस्कृतासु च ।
मातापित्रोस्त्रिरात्रं स्यादितरेषां यथाविधि ॥

women's forced illiteracy and ignorance, a girl, it is ordained, should be wedded when she is yet a minor and must be given away by the father or other guardian to a man of his choice, quite independently of her, who is too young to exercise any choice in the matter. Since the act of gift has thus become a necessary and essential preliminary to the marriage proper, which should follow it almost immediately under normal circumstances, the time prescribed for the act of gift is meant as the time for the marriage proper. If there be any interval between the two, it may be due to the consideration that the girl to be married is still too young and that there is yet ample time for the celebration of the marriage proper prior to her attainment of puberty. But this interval occurs only in exceptional cases; and when the interval may appear too long, the father is allowed to give the girl away to another man. Under all circumstances the marriage proper should take place, according to the Smritis, prior to the age of puberty. The Smritis, seem to teach, as proved by the existing practice, that, as a general rule, the gift and the marriage proper should take place on one and the same day; and hence it is that no separate time is prescribed for the marriage proper as distinguished from the act of gift. As a matter of fact, in all Smritis including that of Manu, the terms gift (*dana*) and marriage (*vivaha*) are indiscriminately used when even such early ages as range between two and eight years are prescribed or allowed.

**The three nights' celibacy cannot be regarded as a period of trial.**

11. Again the Dewan Bahadur says (para 2) that with a view to engage in the solemn contract of marriage,—which, according to him, is to take place a considerable time after the act of gift transferred all the ownership and rights over the girl from the father to the receiver,—an examination as to the competency of each other for the contract takes place at the time of marriage. He further imagines that the period of celibacy during the marriage ritual may be another such trial. All this is mere imagination. We are told that an examination of the suitor and the girl takes place prior to the gift of the girl as to their fitness for married life; but we are not aware of any examination taking place after the gift and prior to the marriage proper. But it is really astonishing that the three days' period of celibacy, when the already married couple are ordained to live on simplest meal and to lie on the same bed without giving vent to any act or thought connected with their conjugal relationship, is taken as a period of trial to see whether they are fit to marry, *i. e.*, to unite together sexually on the fourth night. On the contrary, this period of continence is enjoined on the couple who have been already united together by the indissoluable bond of marriage on the completion of the Saptapadi; and it marks the next stage after marriage, leading to the purificatory rites on the fourth night and constituting a necessary preparation (as I have already shewn, *vide* para 9) for the first act of

physical conjugal union,—all this making up a different samskara. The whole rite, moreover, serves to impress the idea that the union through marriage already established and completed is one of spiritual and moral companionship, the physical act of conjugal union being prompted by the behests of the spiritual law for the advancement of the Divine purpose in the creation of humanity (*vide* Chap. I, para 7). Does the Dewan Bahadur mean that, in case the couple find themselves unable to agree in the course of the three days of celibate life, the previous part of the marriage ritual is rendered nugatory and the parties are then left free to marry any other? If so, it is quite against the ordinance of Manu who enjoins (V. 151) that the girl is bound to serve her whole life the man to whom she has been given away by her father or brother and should not transgress him even when he is dead.

**The alleged proper age for the gift.**

12. In this connection another point presents itself for criticism. The Dewan Bahadur says that the time for the gift of the girl by the human owner, *i. e.*, the father or other guardian, commences from her eleventh year. The only passage which lends itself to this interpretation is the one which designates a girl of eight years as a *Gauri*, a girl of nine as a *Rohini*, and a girl of ten as *Kanya*. Such difinitions are originally given in the special sections which treat of the merit of different degrees accruing from

the gift of the girls of eight, nine and ten years of age. Each author gives his own definitions in this context. They are not meant for general use in the Smritis. There are other specific descriptions or definitions of a *kanya* or marriageable girl which apply to a younger one than a girl of ten. So, if the marriage of a girl can take place before ten, it needs no saying that her gift may take place before ten. As a matter of fact, as generally used in connection with marriage, *Kanya* means an unmarried girl or woman, not necessarily a girl of ten or an older girl. What has the Dewan Bahadur to say as regards the most eligible age for marriage recommended in the following passage ?—

विवाहस्त्वष्टवर्षायाः कन्यायास्तु प्रशस्यते ॥

"The marriage of a girl of eight years is highly esteemed."—*(Samvarta.)*

This is quoted by some exegetists such as Vaidyanatha. Manu also (IX. 93) says:

"Let a man of twenty-four years marry a girl of eight years."

And Parashara (Ch. VII. 4) distinctly stigmatises a girl above ten years as a Rajasvala, as a Shudra woman, not fit for a Brahmin to marry.

**The age of spiritual ownership.**

13. I shall touch one more point and then conclude. It has been said by the Dewan Bahadur that the time of the gift by the last of the three spiritual owners, namely, Agni,—the other two

being Soma and Vishvavasu,—is the age when the girl's breasts are fully developed. What this spiritual ownership means has not been explained by him. The Smritis are neither precise nor unanimous in their accounts of the ages of the respective spiritual ownership of a girl by these Gods. One Smriti distributes the period of their ownership over the first six years of the girl's life after birth, and thus leaves her free to be married to a man when she is seven years old after birth or eight years after conception. Another Smriti assigns the period to a later part of the girl's life; but contrary to the Vedic Law, it enjoins marriage before the girl is taken possession of by the Gods. So the Dewan Bahadur's conclusion as to the marriageable age of a girl based on the period of Agni's spiritual ownership, though agreeing with the Vedic teaching, is opposed to some of the Smritis.

**The theory not founded on Shastras.**

14. Now to conclude. The Dewan Bahadur has formulated the foregoing theory of "Aryan Vedic Law on Marriage" and professes to have thereby reconciled the Vedic Law of adult marriage with the ordinances of the Smritis recommending the gift of girls at an early age. As shown above, his doctrine comes into conflict with one or another of the recognised Smritis, and he cannot, therefore, be said to have succeeded in his attempt at a reconciliation of the Shruti and the Smritis. He has only raised a superstructure with materials gathered here and there from the Scriptures of varied authority and scope; but the combination

does not contribute to the harmony or the strength of the whole. In outward form its different parts may appear to be consistent with one another ; but regarded from the standpoint of the authorities on which it is based, it is found to be made up of inconsistent elements, resting on foundations of unequal strength and value, and all counteracting against one other.

**Early gift is productive of tangible evils.**

15. Though I agree with the venerable Dewan Bahadur as to the Vedic Law of Adult Marriage, I have yet thought it necessary to criticise his doctrine at length, inasmuch as, with a view to reconcile the Shruti with the Smritis, he has enunciated a law of gift which is not only opposed in its details to the Smritis and the Shruti, but is also productive of tangible evils. By the Law of Gift he has enunciated, the father nominates in the eleventh year of his daughter a man with whom she may consort for the satisfaction of her possible early lustful tendencies which may come into operation soon after she arrives at the age of puberty, *i.e.*, at twelve or thereabouts. By this the father merely panders to the lascivious tendencies of the girl, so that the system is not calculated to avoid the too early consummation of conjugal relationship, whereof the evil results are so visible in our society at present. It would be more desirable to devise a wholesome system of early education and discipline by which such tendencies may be held in control till proper time for marriage arrives.

**The law of early gift is a concession to weakness.**

16. A more honest course open to the investigator in dealing with this question is to admit the conflict that there is between the Shruti and the Smritis, and to try and find out its cause. The Shruti lays down laws for all time, whereas the different Smritis record the existing practices of particular ages and prescribe new rules for the peoples of those ages. This is admitted by our Shastras. And a critical examination of the teachings of the Shruti and the Smritis makes it clear that while the laws of the Shruti are meant as ideals to be kept in view at all times, the laws laid down in the Smritis are their adaptations meant for the people of the particular periods to which the Smritis refer, out of regard for their many weaknesses. It behoves us therefore to understand the Vedic ideal of marriage and to strive hard to overcome the existing weaknesses and to pave the way for the realisation of that noble ideal in the present conditions of our society.

**Education, Brahmacharya and adult marriage.**

17. The law of early marriage laid down in the Smritis is traceable, as I have already shewn, partly, if not wholly, to the exclusion of girls from all systematic education, secular and religious. By throwing open the portals of liberal education to the female half of the population so as to train the girls for their future responsible position as ideal wives and mothers in the Aryan household, we may revive the old Vedic law of adult marriage. The institution of early marriage may

also be partly due to the early changes in the economic condition of the people, to the state of anarchy and confusion which prevailed by turns in different parts of India for some hundreds and thousands of years, and to the long political domination in the country of less civilized but physically sturdier races from the West. But now that, by the Gracious Dispensation of the Superme, we are brought in contact with, and under the political protection of, an equally civilized race of the Aryan stock and enjoy an unprecedented era of peace and security, there is no longer any necessity for us Indo-Aryans to adhere to the law of early marriage in the case of girls, which is quite foreign to the spirit of the Aryan race, which acts so prejudicially upon the true culture of the female half of the population, and which gives birth to a half-developed Aryan not worthy of the noble destiny of the mighty race to which he belongs. So, at least as an incentive to the much needed improvement in the status of the "better half" of the whole nation resulting in the generation of a fully developed, noble, vigorous, heroic manhood, my theory of the Vedic Law of Adult Marriage with its necessary corollary of liberal education for the youth of both sexes under the regimen of the ancient Brahmacharya seems worthy of popular acceptance, apart from the sanction of the Veda, the highest authority in these matters.

# CHAPTER III.

## Conflict between the Shruti and the Smriti.

### SECTION I.—*Dewan Bahadur R. Ragoonath Rao's view.*

[After reading my address on the "Vedic Law of Marriage" which originally appeared in the *Mysore Herald* dated 28th October 1907, the Dewan Bahadur addressed a letter to the editor of the *Mysore Herald*, which was published in its issue dated 14th November 1907.]

He wrote as follows:—

"I read with immense pleasure the address of M. R. Ry. Mahadeva Sastriar Avergal, B.A.,—whose "Studies had been monopolised by Vedanta and kindred systems of philosophy,"—on the Vedic Law, etc., on Marriage. I shall be obliged to M. R. Ry. Mahadeva Sastriar, B.A., of the Oriental Library if he would point out to me (1) the passages in the Manu-Smriti making marriage compulsory in the case of women, and (2) enjoining the parents to get their daughters married as soon in life as possible before attaining the age of puberty; and passages in the Parashara-Smriti, insisting 'that a girl should be married at ten or

earlier, declaring that an unmarried girl above ten years is on a par with a Shudra girl and is not fit for a Brahmin to marry.' I have not yet been able to find the aforesaid passages in the copies of works referred to by him in my library. I agree with him that, when the practice advocated by the Smritis and unwritten custom conflicts with the Vedic Law, the latter should be taken up as authoritative in preference to the Smritis or custom (*vide* Ashvalayana-Sutra, **यत्तु समानं,** etc.) I hold that the Smritis are not in conflict with the Shrutis. I may have to modify my view, if the Sastriar's quotations are found correct on verification."

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## SECTIONS II.—*The marriageable age of girls according to Manu and Parashara.*

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[The following reply to the above was addressed to the Editor of the *Mysore Herald* and published in its issue dated 18th November 1907.]

**MY REPLY.**

2. I have read with interest Dewan Bahadur R. Ragoonath Rao's letter published in your issue of the 14th instant regarding my recent address on the Vedic Law of Marriage delivered at the 3rd annual meeting of the Aryadharmojjivini Sabha held during the last Dasara. A new recruit like

myself entering the ranks of the army of Social Reform and Progress has every reason to feel gratified at having attracted the sympathetic notice of the veteran soldier who has been fighting incessantly with no little power and effect for the last half-century in the cause of social and religious well-being of our people. Like a new venturer in the field, I take up, with no little diffidence, the task of answering the questions raised by this long-standing and distinguished General who must have seen and won many a fight, and who must have used all the weapons available in the armoury of our Scriptures in his battle with the upholders of the current marriage laws and customs.

**The points at issue.**

3. To come to the points at issue. The Dewan Bahadur does not hold, as I do, that the Smritis like those of Manu and Parashara are in conflict with the Shruti. He says he has not been able to find passages in the Manu-smriti (1) making marriage compulsory in the case of women and (2) enjoining the parents to get their daughters married as soon in life as possible before attaining the age of puberty, and (3) passages in the Parashara-smriti insisting that a girl should be married at ten or earlier and declaring that an unmarried girl above ten years is on a par with a Shudra girl and is not fit for a Brahmin to marry.

**According to Manu, marriage is compulsory for women.**

4. I shall now briefly shew how I have made out that, according to the Manu-smriti, marriage is

compulsory in the case of women. After treating, with regard to the male children of the twice-born classes, of the sacramental rites of *jatakarma* (birth-ceremony), *namakarana* (name-giving), *nishkramana* (leaving the house), *annaprashana* (rice-eating) *chudakarana* (tonsure), *upanayana* (initiation into the study of the Vedas), and *keshanta* (hair-clipping),all accompained with mantras, the Manusmriti says (II. 66-68) as follows :—

**अमन्त्रिका तु कार्येयं स्त्रीणामावृदशेषतः ।**
**संस्कारार्थं शरीरस्य यथाकालं यथाक्रमम् ॥**
**वैवाहिको विधिः स्त्रीणां संस्कारो वैदिकः स्मृतः ।**
**पतिसेवा गुरौ वासः गृहार्थोऽग्निपरिक्रिया ॥**
**एष प्रोक्तो द्विजातीनामौपनायनिको विधिः ।**
**उत्पत्तिव्यञ्जकः पुण्यः कर्मयोगं निबोधत ॥**

" In the case of women, all this ceremonial course, without the mantras, should be gone through for the consecration of the body, in proper time and in proper order.

" The marriage ritual is ordained as the Vedic sacrament in the case of women ; service to the husband is residence with the teacher, and household duty is service to the Fire.

" Thus has been declared the rule relating to upanayana (initiation) for the twice-born, that holy rite which reveals their origin. Now may ye learn the duty of this order."

The term " all this ceremonial " (in the first of the three verses quoted here) refers to the ceremonies previously described, beginning with Jatakarma.

Upanayana, though previously spoken of, cannot be referred to by the term because it is essentially a Vedic ritual, a ritual invariably attended with mantras and intended for the study of mantras"; it is described as "**श्रुतितः संस्कारः**" by Apastamba (I. 1. 9). Upanayana unaccompanied with mantras is a contradiction in terms. That such is the meaning of the author of the Smriti is shewn by the next verse, wherein it is said that the marriage ritual is the first Vedic sacrament in the case of women. The essential duties of the initiated boy (upanita), such as residence with the teacher and service to the sacred fire, have their equivalents in the essential duties of a married girl, namely, service to the husband and devotion to the household duties. From this it is clear that marriage in the case of girls takes the place of Upanayana in the case of boys, establishing their title to the privileges of the twice-born, *i.e.*, entitling them to a share in the Vedic rites and sacrifices. That is to say, marriage is compulsory for a girl as Upanayana is compulsory for a boy, since among the twice-born, a married girl alone can be recognised as the twice-born.

5. Moreover, if the words "all this ceremonial course" refer to Upanayana also, *i.e.*, if a girl can undergo Upanayana without mantras, as she can undergo the other ceremonies antecedent to it, there is no occasion for referring to the girls' marriage here in this section, which treats only of Upanavana. By referring therefore in the chapter on Upanayana to the marriage of girls as the first

Vedic sacrament for them and by shewing correspondences between the essential duties of a married girl and those of an initiated boy, Manu evidently teaches that girls have no right to the sacrament of Upanayana, and that marriage, which is the first Vedic sacrament in their case, takes the place of Upanayana, as marking their birth among the twice-born. Hence the words of Manu which follow: "Thus has been declared the rule relating to the initiation of the twice-born." Thus according to the Manu-smriti, marriage is compulsory for the twice-born girls.

6. This point can also be made out from the section treating of a widowed woman's duties. I refer to the following verses (V. 157-160):

कामं तु क्षपयेद्देहं पुष्पमूलफलैश्शुभैः ।
न तु नामापि गृह्णीयात्पत्यौ प्रेते परस्य तु ॥

आसीतामरणात् क्षान्ता नियता ब्रह्मचारिणी ।
यो धर्म एकपत्नीनां काङ्क्षन्ती तमनुत्तमम् ॥

अनेकानि सहस्राणि कुमारब्रह्मचारिणाम् ।
दिवं गतानि विप्राणामकृत्वा कुलसन्ततिम् ॥

मृते भर्तरि साध्वी स्त्री ब्रह्मचर्ये व्यवस्थिता ।
स्वर्गं गच्छत्यपुत्राऽपि यथा ते ब्रह्मचारिणः ॥

"When the husband is dead, she had better reduce the body by feeding on good flowers, roots and fruits. Let her not so much as utter another man's name.

"Let her remain, till death, emaciated, ascetic, celibate, seeking that unsurpassed merit which pertains to the women owning one husband.

"Many thousands of Brahmin men, who remained celibates from boyhood onward, have reached heaven without propagating their families.

"The righteous woman, firm in celibacy when her husband is dead, goes to heaven, though without sons, like the men celibates."

Manu here enjoins that a widow should lead a life of celibacy. This path of celibacy is not open to an unmarried girl, while it is open to an unmarried man who has gone through Upanayana and studied the Vedas (*vide* II. 243-244). This evidently shows that marriage is for a girl what Upanayana is for a boy. A man may take to the life of celibacy before marriage; but he has to exercise the choice only after he has passed through the normal course of life laid down for a Vedic student, *i. e.*, after he finished the normal period of **गुरुकुलवास** or residence with the teacher. So also, woman has to tread the path of celibacy only on the expiry of her life of tutelage with the husband,—which stands in her case for Gurukula-vasa,—*i.e.*, when she becomes a widow on the death of her husband. The difference lies in this, that in the case of a woman it is not a matter of choice, the life of celibacy being incumbent on a widow if she were to go the way of a virtuous woman and attain the highest heaven open to a woman. Therefore, according to the Manu-smriti, every maiden is bound to marry, and every widow is bound to lead the life of celibacy. A widow who transgresses

her husband, even if it be for the sake of progeny, is censured in the following words (V. 161-162) :—

अपत्यलोभाद्या तु स्त्री भर्तारमतिवर्तते ।
सेह निन्दामवाप्नोति पतिलोकाच्च हीयते ॥
नान्योत्पन्ना प्रजाऽस्तीह नचाप्यन्यपरिग्रहे ।
न द्वितीयश्च साध्वीनां क्वचिद्भर्तोपदिश्यते ॥

"The woman who by desire for progeny transgresses the husband is open to censure in this world and will fail to reach the world of the husband.

"The offspring produced by another is not deemed lawful here, nor that begotten in another man's wife. To righteous women no second husband is ever allowed."

Not even the widow who has failed to fulfil her function (as laid down by Manu IX. 96)—by not bearing children before the death of her husband—is allowed to remarry with a view to get offspring; for, it is said that a childless widow can attain heaven by strict adherence to a life of celibacy like the lifelong celibate man. The only passage in the Manu-smriti (IX. 89) which seems to lend some support to the view that marriage is not compulsory for women will be noticed presently in dealing with the second point, as it occurs in the section treating of the marriageable age of girls.

**Marriageable age of girls according to Manu.**

7. I now proceed to show the basis of my statement that the Manu-smriti enjoins the parents to get their daughters married as early in life as

possible to suitable husbands. In IX. 4—"**कालेऽदाता पिता वाच्यः**"—it is said that the father who has not given away (his daughter) in time is worthy of censure. So in the case of girls, there is one particular period held more eligible for marriage than any other. This most eligible period is indicated in the verse IX. 93:

**त्रिंशद्वर्षो वहेत्कन्यां हृद्यां द्वादशवार्षिकीम् ।**
**त्र्यष्टवर्षोऽष्टवर्षां वा धर्मे सीदति सत्वरः ॥**

"Let a man of thirty marry a charming girl of twelve years; or let a man of twentyfour hasten to marry a girl of eight years, when duty seems to fail."

That is to say, from eight to twelve is the most eligible age for girls to be married. Even an earlier age is recommended (IX. 88) in the following words:

**" उत्कृष्टायाभिरूपाय वराय सदृशाय च ।**
**अप्राप्तामपि तां तस्मै कन्यां दद्याद्यथाविधि ॥**

"To a superior, handsome and suitable suitor let him give away the girl according to law, though she has not come to the proper age."

At any rate the most proper age for the marriage of girls is prior to the age of puberty, as the following verse (IX. 89) shews:

**काममा मरणात्तिष्ठेद्गृहे कन्यर्तुमत्यपि ।**
**न चैवैनां प्रयच्छेत्तु गुणहीनाय कर्हिचित् ॥**

"Though she has attained the age of puberty, the maiden may rather remain at home till death; but let (the father) never give her to one devoid of virtue."

The permission here given to a father to keep his daughter at home even after the age of puberty under some exceptional circumstances implies that, as a general rule, she should be given away before attaining the age of puberty. Further, this supposed permission to keep the daughter unmarried during the whole life-time, given as it is under exceptional circumstances, is of doubtful value, inasmuch as the intention of the author, as conveyed in this verse read in connection with the preceding one, seems to be to impress on the father the necessity of giving the daughter in marriage to one possessed of recognised virtues, not to one devoid of such virtues. Certainly, the aim of the two statements—namely, that when a suitable husband is at hand, a girl may be married even before the proper age of eight, and that she may rather remain at the father's home the whole life than be married to an unworthy husband,—is not so much to convey a recommendation regarding the marriageable age as to exhort the father to take care that his daughter is married to a worthy husband. It cannot indeed be made out, from this verse, that marriage is optional in the case of women in the same way as it is in the case of men. Never can a woman by choice remain unmarried as a man can. Even interpreting the verse literally without any reference to the context, it is only as long as no worthy husband is available that a woman may remain unmarried. As soon as a worthy man is available, she is bound to marry.

8. Moreover, no woman can remain unmarried

without risking her status in society. An unmarried woman has no status in social or religious life. She has not yet attained recognition as a *dvija* and is not therefore, competent to enter any of the holy orders (ashramas) of life-long celibacy. In fact, without having passed through the normal preparatory course of student-life—*i.e.*, **उपकुर्वाणब्रह्मचर्य** as opposed to **नैष्ठिकब्रह्मचर्य**, the path of life-long celibacy accompanied with service to the teacher and the sacred fire, and which alone is counted as one of the four ashramas—no man can tread the path of any of the four ashramas. Being debarred from Upanayana and student-life by Manu, no woman can tread the path of celibacy, prior to marriage. To her, marriage stands for Upanayana, and married life for student-life. Accordingly the path of life-long celibacy (Brahmacharaya) is, as we have seen, prescribed only for a widow, *i.e.*, for a woman who by marriage has become entitled to the privileges of the twice-born, and who by married life has been prepared as it were for the life of celibacy under the protection of a male relative. So that, Manu would only stultify himself, if he were to mean that marriage is not compulsory for women.

9. This interpretation is confirmed by the next two verses (IX. 90-91):

त्रीणि वर्षाण्युदीक्षेत कुमार्यृतुमती सती ।
ऊर्ध्वं तु कालादेतस्माद्विन्देत सदृशं पतिम् ॥
अदीयमाना भर्तारमधिगच्छेद्यदि स्वयम् ।
नैनः किञ्चिदवाप्नोति न च यं साऽधिगच्छति ॥

"Let the girl who has attained puberty wait three years. After that period let her resort to a suitable husband.

"If the girl herself resorts to a husband, without being given away, no sin whatever does she incur, nor is he guiltv to whom she resorts."

Here, the right of giving away the daughter is limited to a period of three years after her attaining the age of puberty. If the father has not given his daughter away for three years after her attaining of puberty, then, as having reached the age of responsibility, she is bound to find a suitable husband herself. Neither the daughter who thus marries a man of her own choice even without the father's consent, nor the man who marries her under such circumstances, incurs any sin whatever. At any rate, no girl may remain without marriage for more than three or four years after the age of puberty. This is tantamount to saying that marriage is compulsory in the case of women.

10. Now to conclude this part of the discussion. According to Manu, marriage is compulsory in the case of women, and the most eligible age for a girl to marry is prior to the age of puberty, from eight to twelve years. Marriage even before eight is recommended in case a suitable husband is at hand; and marriage after twelve years and after puberty is allowed only under exceptional circumstances.

**Marriageable age of girls according to Parashara.**

11. Let me take up the third point at issue. The passages in which Parashara speaks of the marriageable age of girls occur in the Prayaschitta section where one will least look out for them. In the seventh Adhyaya, Parashara teaches how to purify oneself when one knowingly or unknowingly has had recourse to impure or forbidden things. In this section, when speaking of the eligible and ineligible girls for marriage, he says (VII. 4-8) as follows:

अष्टवर्षा भवेद्गौरी नववर्षा तु रोहिणी ।
दशवर्षा भवेत्कन्या अत ऊर्ध्वं रजस्वला ॥
प्राप्ते तु द्वादशे वर्षे यः कन्यां न प्रयच्छति ।
मासिमासि रजस्तस्याः पिबन्ति पितरोऽनिशम् ॥
माता चैव पिता चैव ज्येष्ठभ्राता तथैव च ।
त्रयस्ते नरकं यान्ति दृष्ट्वा कन्यां रजस्वलाम् ॥
यस्तां समुद्वहेत्कन्यां ब्राह्मणो मदमोहितः ।
असंभाष्यो ह्यपाङ्क्तेयः स वि्प्रो वृषलीपतिः ॥
यः करोत्येकरात्रेण वृषलीसेवनं द्विजः ।
स भैक्षभुग्जपन्नित्यं त्रिभिर्वर्षैर्विशुद्ध्यति ॥

"A girl of eight years is termed Gauri; a girl of nine years is termed Rohini; and a girl of ten years is termed Kanya; beyond that, she is a Rajasvala (tainted).

"If a man does not give away his girl by the time she attains the tweifth year, every month his ancestors drink of her menstrual fluid.

"The mother and the father as well as the eldest brother—these three, if they see the maiden tainted with menstrual fluid, go to the hell.

"The Brahman who, deluded by lust, marries such a girl is not fit to talk to, or to dine with ; such a Brahman is the husband of a Shudra woman.

"The Brahman who has intercourse with a Shudra woman for a single night should undergo penance for three years to purify himself, begging for his food and uttering sacred mantras."

According to Parashara, from eight to ten is the marriageable age for girls. After ten, the girl is a Rajasvala. Woe be to the father who has not given his daughter away before twelve! His ancestors will have to drink incessantly of the nasty fluid! Those responsible for the marriage of a girl go to the hell if she becomes a Rajasvala, *i.e.*, if she has passed her tenth year, without marriage. The Brahman who marries a Rajasvala, a girl over ten, is damned because she is an impure girl, being on a par with a Shudra woman. To give us an idea of the enormity of the sin committed by him who has married such a girl for life-long companionship, Parashara prescribes a severe penance of three years' duration to wash off the sin of a single night's intercourse with a Shudra woman.

**Early and compulsory marriage is enjoined in the Smritis.**

12. Thus by a natural interpretation of the passages occurring in the Smritis of Manu and Parashara, I have come to the conclusion that these authors recommend alike marriage before puberty in the case of girls, there being only this difference between them, that while Manu does not condemn altogether marriage after puberty, Parashara is very strong in his condemnation thereof. Putting the two Smritis together, we may see that they fix the age of puberty in the case of girls at twelve or thereabouts. This has an important bearing on the other point at issue, namely, the question whether marriage is compulsory or not for girls. We have seen that Manu permits the father to give away his daughter within three years after her attaining the age of puberty, that is, till the fifteenth or sixteenth year of her age. When the girl has reached or completed her sixteenth year, she has to wed herself to a suitable husband as soon as possible, thus the responsibility being shifted on to the shoulders of the girl who is supposed to have reached the age of discretion at sixteen. Thus according to Manu the marriageable age for a girl ranges from eight to sixteen and is even earlier in some cases. This is exactly the period when a Brahman boy is eligible for upanayana. This supports my interpretation of the passages quoted above from the second Adhyaya of the Manu-Smriti, which I explained to mean that, among the twice-born, marriage in the case

girls takes the place of upanayana and is therefore compulsory. Some of the other Smritis make an explicit statement to this effect.

**Status of woman according to Manu.**

13. Such interpretation, moreover, fits in with the status accorded to woman in society by Manu. Debarred as she is from all education, having no right to study the Vedas and sciences, she is entirely dependent upon man for guidance in all concerns of life, temporal as well as spiritual (*Vide* Manu V. 147—156). Manu says (IX. 3 "**न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति,**" "Woman is not fit for an independent life."

**The Vedic Law of Marriage is meant for women of a higher status.**

14. Laying down such laws of marriage as these, the Smritis from Manu's down to Parashara's, place themselves in opposition to the Shruti. The latter, as I have shown above in the first chapter, lays down a different law, namely, that at the time of marriage the bride as well as the bridegroom must be of a mature mind, having had a previous training for due discharge of the duties of a house-holder. According to the Shruti, the wife has very responsible duties to discharge from the day of marriage to the last day of her life. The Smritis expressly lay down laws for a particular stage in the history of our society,—for that stage in which girls are not given opportunities for intellectual, moral and spiritual culture prior to marriage. On the contrary, the Shruti lays down laws for all time, with no reference to any particular

stage of society, presupposing equal opportunities afforded to man and woman to prepare themselves for the future responsible life of house-holders in a progressive Aryan community.

**How to bridge the gulf.**

15. Thus distinguishing the scope of the two sets of our Scriptures, we can easily explain the apparent discrepancies between the two teachings. If the venerable Dewan Bahadur who has been studying the question for half a century and more can bridge the gulf between the two in any other manner, I shall feel highly obliged to him, for it is not without suffering some severe mental pang that I, who am second to none in reverence for our Scriptures, feel obliged to discard even small portions of the Smritis—which on many a socio-religious question of vital importance embody valuable lessons for the Hindus and for all people on earth—on the ground of their opposition to the teachings of the Shruti. At present I feel inclined to believe that the interpretation I have put on the passages quoted from the Manu-smriti and the Parashara-smriti is the correct one, because it is supported by the leading commentators and exegetists (Nibandhakaras). The burden of showing the contrary lies on him who differs from these interpreters; and the Dewan Bahadur, I hope, will enlighten the public with his interpretation of the passages quoted above. If these passages quoted from the published editions of the Manu-smriti and the Parashara-smriti be not found in the

copies of the works found in his library, it will be only an additional support given to the contention of the ancient Mimamsakas that the Smritis are open to interpolations and omissions and are therefore of doubtful authority as records of the teachings contained in the Vedic texts once accessible to the authors of the Smritis, but now lost to us.

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## SECTION III.—*Dewan Bahadur R. Ragoonatha Rao's criticism of my exposition of the Law of Marriage as taught in Manu's and Parashara's Smritis.*

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[His letter to the Editor of the *Mysore Herald.*]

**Manu and Parashara are not opposed to the Veda.**

16 "Before the receipt of the issue of the 18th instant [November 1907] in which M. R. Ry. Mahadeva Sastriar's reply [Ch. III. Section ii] was published, I sent my letter of the 20th instant [Ch. II. Sec. 1] on the question of the Marriage Laws. On the receipt of the aforesaid issue, I carefully read the authorities referred to by the Sastriar. They are all to be found in the copies of the works with me. I read the quotations from Manu to mean no mandatory precepts enjoining the *marriage* of females when they were minors. If they were capable of being construed against the clear injunctions of the Vedas, I thought I should not construe them as such No doubt

the quotation from Parashara is more susceptible of the meaning that a Brahman *marrying* a menstruated girl commits a sin; but I read it to mean that if a guardian does not make a gift of a virgin—when she is a **सकामा** (wants a husband) and when many are willing to receive her as a gift (Vasishtha, Ch. 17),—for some purposes of his own, *viz.*, for Kanya-shoolkam (girl-price), the guardian is sinful; and he who **मदमोहितः** (infatuated by lust), gives the largest price for her and marries is also sinful. This construction would be consistent with Manu's verse (IX. 91) quoted by the Sastriar, *viz.*, "**नैनः किंचित्**" etc., and the Mahabharata Anusasanika Adhyaya 44:

**पजा न हीयते तस्याः रतिश्च भरतर्षभ ॥**

I therefore still think that these authorities are not opposed to the Veda, and I agree with the Sastriar that if these were opposed to the Veda, they are null and void against the clear statements of the Vedas. I am glad that in the main point, there is no difference of opinion between me and the Sastriar."

**Marriage is not compulsory for women, according to Manu.**

"Regarding the necessity of a marriage samskara to a female, I hold that there are instances of women not marrying and obtaining higher heavens than those available to a married

Sadhwi woman. My Sanskrit work contains the details, **विध्युक्त-वैवाहिक-शास्त्रजिज्ञासा** 50-13-19. A Patiloka is a perishable heaven, while that obtained by the unmarried is eternal or more lasting (*vide* Mandlik's Manu, commentaries, Ch. V. 154, 155, 156, 158 & 165)."

*My reply*.*—The women here referred to must have lived at a time when the Indo-Aryan community was governed by the Vedic Laws which allowed Upanayana to women, who, on the completion of their student-life, could choose like men either to marry or to lead an independent life of life-long celibacy. But according to Manu and later law-givers, no woman is entitled to Upanayana and Brahmacharya prior to marriage, while, to her, marriage and married life take their place (*vide supra* para 8).

18. "I read the letter of M. R. Ry. Mahadeva Sastriar published in the issue of the 18th instant of the *Mysore Herald* with much care. The Sastriar has quoted extracts from Manu to show how he has made out that, according to Manu Smriti, marriage is compulsory in the case of women. They had not led me to his conclusion, nor do they do so now. The verses 66-68, Ch. II (*vide supra* para 4) show that up to marriage all ceremonies for the purification of the body of women should be

* The replies under paras 17-24 have been added in the course of my revision of the original newspaper cuttings for their reappearance in the form of this pamphlet.

performed without reciting Vedic Mantras and that their marriage should be performed with them. These do not declare that marriage is compulsory. Women by marriage do not become twice-born or Dwija (Amara). A married girl has not been recognised as the twice-born or Dwija."

*My reply* :—By saying that marriage is the first Samskara done with the Vedic Mantras in the case of a woman, Manu teaches that like Upanayana which, as an essentially Vedic Samskara **श्रुतितः संस्कारः** is compulsory in the case of a man, marriage is compulsory for her. He accordingly says (II. 67) in express terms that in her case married life and its duties takes the place of the student life and its duties enjoined on a man. Marriage does make her a Dwija (twice-born) since Manu says (II. 68), in reference to Upanayana in the case of boys and to the Vedic rite of marriage in the case of girls, that these ceremonies mark their second birth as belonging to the twice-born Aryas. It is only as a Dwija that a woman can take part in the Vedic rituals along with her husband, whereas a Shudra, who is outside the pale of the twice-born and is not therefore given a second birth by means of a Vedic ritual, is regarded as unfit for any Vedic sacrificial act : **तस्माच्छूद्रो यज्ञेऽनवक्लृप्तः** (T. S. 7-1-1).

19. "The next quotation is Ch. V. 157-160 (*vide supra* para 6). These refer to a class of women who wish to attain a particular heaven called Patiloka. Verse 160 shows that she might

not have sexual intercourse after the death of her husband with a view to get children and thereby obtain Swarga, an inferior heaven."

*My reply*:—On the contrary, Manu enjoins here a life of celibacy (Brahmacharya) on every widow, and forbids re-marriage even in the case of a childless widow who may wish to rear offspring with a view to accomplish the main purpose of her life.

20. "The next quotation is Ch. II. verses 243-244. These refer to a male and not to a woman. The analogy carried out is not convincing, and if at all, is far-fetched. These do not say that a woman cannot become a Parivrajika before marriage. Many have so become and they are every day worshipped and referred to in Mahabharata—(*Vide* my pamhlet, pp. 13-19)."

*My reply*.—Of course the verses II. 243-244 apply to men, and they were quoted to invite attention to the rule laid down by Manu that no man is permitted to take a vow of life-long celibacy **नैष्ठिक-ब्रह्मचर्य** before the completion of the normal preparatory course of the student-life. Applying this rule to the case of woman, we may understand Manu to say, consistently with his exclusion of woman from Vedic study, that no woman can take a vow of celibacy, even under the guardianship of her nearest male relative, without completing the normal term of married life, which closes with the husband's death, and which in her case takes the

place of the preparatory Brahmacharya. This fits in so well with Manu's doctrine of woman's dependence on man that the contrary view would seem to be altogether inconceivable. As for the women anchorites spoken of in the Mahabharata and other works, read my reply under para 17.

**Manu does not enjoin early marriage.**

21. "Versé 4, Ch. IX (*vide* para 7) refers to *gift* at proper time. Verses 90-93 refer to non-gift. Verse 94 requires examination, as it refers apparently to marriage. (See Manu, Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXV.) This is susceptible of various constructions and the commentators have widely differed. They say that this does not lay down a rule. I am disposed to think that the word उद्वहेत् refers to accepting a maiden for marrying her and not for marriage proper—(See Mandlik's Manu)."

*My reply.—Vide supra* Ch. II. para 10, where I have shown that, according to the normal procedure marriage follows gift immediately, without any long interval. Chapter IX. 94 is the only place where Manu states definitely the marriageable age and cannot therefore be explained away.

22. "The argument of the Sastriar to prove that a woman must be married falls flat by several anecdotes in the Mahabharata and other works. I repeat that a married woman is not recognized as a Dwija or twice-born.

Manu has there not declared that marriage is compulsory to women. He has not said that the most eligible age for a girl to marry is prior to the age of puberty. As marriage is completed with co-habitation, it could never have been intended by him at her eighth year as it is a physical impossibility; and if betrothal was intended, it was no marriage but a gift or something like it. It was said to be necessary only in special cases."

*My reply*.—That marriage is compulsory for women is not my view; I do not approve of it, as it is against the Vedic Law. It is the law laid down in the Manu-Smriti as we have it. As to the women anchorites spoken of in the Mahabharata, etc., read again my reply under para 17. Under para 18 I have shown how a woman becomes a Dwija or twice-born by marriage accompanied with Vedic ritual. It is this status of the twice-born wife which distinguishes her from the Shudra wife wedded to a twice-born man. Excluded from the early student-life and from Vedic and Scientific culture, women are unfit for any sort of independent life, as Manu says (IX. 3) **न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति** and marriage is therefore made compulsory for the twice-born women as student-life is compulsory for the twice-born men. The present custom of compulsory and early marriage in the case of women is based on this teaching of Manu and other Smritikaras. Though according to the Vedic Law of adult marriage co-habitation may immediately follow marriage, it does not constitute a

part of marriage. Manu says that marriage is complete with the *Panigrahana* and the *Saptapadi.* The co-habitation in proper season (ritu), which alone is enjoined by Law, forms part of quite another Samskara known as *Garbhadhana.* Co-habitation out of the proper season—even such as may take place on the fourth night after the Panigrahana under the rules laid down in the Grihya-Sutras—is said to be an act prompted by lust and not enjoined by Law (*vide* Paraskara Grihya-Sutra, I. xi. 7-8); so that, according to the definition of marriage given by Manu (VIII. 227) as consisting in the ceremony of the Panigrahna ending with the Saptapadi, marriage at eight is not a physical impossibility. In this connection, read again Ch. II. para 9. Normally, gift and marriage take place on the same day. Early gift or betrothal is not "said to be necessary only in special cases;" on the contrary, it is made a bounden duty on the part of a girl's guardian by the Smritis. The rule is quite the other way: it is only late betrothal and late marriage that are allowed by Manu only in special cases, while they are altogether condemned by Parashara and other later Smritikaras.

☞ A further study of the Vedic texts bearing on marriage, which I have made since the writing of the articles collected together in this pamphlet, has led to the conclusion that, strictly speaking, gift (dana) and marriage (vivaha) are simultaneous mutually dependent acts. The sacrament of marriage consists in the ceremonial acceptance of the proffered hand of a maiden by

her suitor, accompanied with a vow of lifelong companionship and mutual co-operation in all their temporal and spiritual concerns and with an invocation of the Higher Beings to witness, aid and bless the union, which thereby becomes indissoluble. The different stages and constituent parts of this sacrament are known as **दानम्** (offering the maiden's hand), **उपयम**: (accepting her hand), **पाणिग्रहणम्** (seizing her hand), **परिणयः** (leading her round the sacred fire), **उद्वाहः** and **विवाहः** (leading her away from the home of her parents), all these terms being by metonymy used in Sanskrit as synonymous designations denoting the whole sacrament of marriage. The gift or offering of the maiden's hand, by her guardian or by herself according to the circumstances, and the suitor's acceptance thereof are two aspects of one and the same ceremonial act and are therefore inseparable. There can be no gift without acceptance and no acceptance without gift; so that, the gift of the maiden's hand cannot be complete without the suitor's acceptance of it. Any divorce between the two aspects may be due only to the preponderance of temporal interests and to a materialistic view of the act in the minds of a sensulistic people, who have failed to realise the true moral and spiritual significance of the sacrament. To the same cause may also be traced the genesis of the idea that marriage is not complete without the physical sexual union The first act of physical sexual union originally formed part of quite a different Samskara known as Garbhadhana, and immediately

followed marriage—intervened, as may be, by the preparatory celibacy of one or three nights,—provided the bride was in proper season (ऋतु:) for impregnation. If she were not in season, the Garbhadhana took place at the next succeeding season. But owing to a misconception of the nature and scope of the sacrament of marriage, the first act of physical intercourse became associated with the marriage ritual and was allowed to take place on the fourth night after the Panigrahana, though the bride was not in season for impregnation; and it was even regarded by some as an obligatory act completing the sacrament of marriage. The propositions that *Dana* (gift) and *Vivaha* (marriage) are two aspects of one and the same sacrament and that marriage is complete without the physical sexual union will be duly established in a separate treatise on the subject which I am now engaged in writing.

**Interpolations in Parashara.**

23. "The Sastriar refers to the Prayaschitta-kanda of Parashara. It is curious that these verses do not appear in the chapter for marriage. The three first verses quoted refer to gift and not to marriage. The fourth clearly refers to marriage. This is opposed to Manu Ch. IX. verses 90-91, and to innumerable authorities and to the Veda. As such, even if it be genuine, which it may not be, it is no authority as stated by the Sastriar."

*My reply*.—The Dewan Bahadur seems to confound the commentator (Madhavacharya) with Parashara. The latter does not speak of marriage except in the section here referred to. There is no special chapter treating of marriage in the text of Parashara's Smriti.—Now the Dewan Bahadur himself makes a statement which, as made by me, he has proposed to attack, and round which all this discussion has turned. He says here that the Parashara-Smriti is opposed to the Vedas and to Manu and other innumerable authorities. My position which he has chosen to attack is nearly the same, that on the law of marriage the Smritis are in conflict with one another and with the Shruti. The plea of interpolation, unless supported by direct evidence, would argue the critic's personal bias. The safer position is that of the Mimamsaka, who in his search for the universal laws laid down by the impersonal Veda, does not hesitate to reject as unauthoritative those mandates of the Smritis which may be irreconcilable with the Vedic teaching or which may narrow its scope, on the ground that such mandates are based on personal views and individual idiosyncracies and necessitated by the accidental circumstances of particular times and places.

**Acoording to Parashara no girl under ten is fit to be given away.**

24. "Parashara does not fix from 8 to 10 as the marriageable age for a girl. After 10 her Smriti name is Rajaswala. This does not mean that she is menstruated at 10. He

admits that, until she is 10 years old, she is not called Kanya, and any gift of a girl below 10 years cannot be, according to him, Kanya-danam."

*My reply*.—Parashara may mean that at or after 10 a girl is fit to menstruate—though every girl may not visibly menstruate at that age,—and is therefore impure and unfit for marriage. According to Parashara a girl in her tenth year, but not after ten,—as other Smritis clearly teach,—is technically designated as "Kanya" But in such phrases as *Kanya-dana*, the word is used in its more general sense of unmarried girl. Moreover, Parashara does not prohibit the giving away of a girl in her eighth or ninth year, while some Smritikaras attach special merit to the giving away or marrying of a Gauri, a girl in her eighth year.

25. "I entirely agree with the contention of the ancient Meemamsakas, as stated by the Sastriar, that Smritis contain interpolations and omissions, which I have, in some cases, irrebuttably proved in my aforesaid work called "विध्युक्त-वैवाहिकशास्त्रजिज्ञासा" The Bhashyakaras have admitted this; Shri Madhvacharya says:—

क्वचित् ग्रन्थान् प्रक्षिपन्ति क्वचिदन्तरितानपि ॥

26. "Let us follow the Vedas."

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## SECTION IV:—*Discussion concluded.*

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**Differnce in the mode of interpretation.**

27. I now proceed to sum up the results of this discussion and close it. As the Dewan Bahadur

R. Ragoonath Rao says, the difference between our views is very slight. He holds that there is no conflict in respect to marriage after puberty between the Shruti and the Smritis, by interpreting very freely such Smriti texts as may seem opposed to the Shruti, and reading into them several unexpressed ideas as if implied, so as to bring the teaching of the Smritis into line with the Vedic Law. This way of going behind the passages of the Smritis may not commend itself to critical exegetists. On the other hand, I would rather interpret such passages literally and with reference to the context and to the author's express views contained in other passages in his own writings. If the teaching of the author of a Smriti thus made out come into conflict with the teaching of the Shruti, the latter should prevail, the former being adopted, if at all, only in so far as it does not contradict the Shruti or supplements it. This is the course recommended by Jaimini, Badarayana, and other ancient Mimamsakas, and is the only safe course to be adopted in the present case, since the chronological sequence and the interdependence of the different works of law including the Vedic and post-Vedic works, cannot be established beyond doubt. In effect, however, *i.e.*, as regards their bearing on the practical course of action in respect to marriage, there seems to be no conflict at all beween the two modes of interpretation. The Dewan Bahadur agrees that those passages in the Smritis which do not lend themselves in any way to an interpretation in accordance

with the Vedic Law should be discarded altogether.

**Agreement as to the main point.**

28. By adopting the two modes of interpretation respectively, we have arrived at the same conclusion as regards the main point. We hold alike that the Vedas teach adult marriage and that this Vedic Law should be adopted in practice. We also agree that, according to the Vedas, marriage is not compulsory for women: but I would allow this freedom at present provided only that men and women have been given in youth a liberal secular and religious education under the regimen of the ancient institution of Brahmacharya,—a life of simplicity in food, of self-control and perfect celibacy, and of implicit obedience to the teacher and service to the Gods,—as they were given in days of old when the pure Vedic Law was in force.

**No need for further discussion.**

29. Further, the differnce in our views as to the age at which, according to Manu and other modern Smriti writers, marriage proper should take place, sinks into nothing, inasmuch as, according to my methood of interpretation, the Vedic Law of adult marriage should prevail as against the law of early marriage taught in the Smritis, while, according to the Dewan Bahadur, the Smritis should be interpreted so as to bring them into line with the Vedic Law of adult marriage. I do not, therefore, propose to prolong the discussion

by trying now to answer* the Dewan Bahadur's objections against my interpretation of Manu and Parashara as enjoining marriage of girls before puberty. Any such attempt will only be on my part a beating about the bush and will further create an impression that we two are altogether at variance with each other, whereas, on the main points at issue, we agree more than any two modern investigators of the subject have hitherto done. If the Dewan Bahadur's interpretation of Manu and Parashara be found acceptable to other investigators and to the orthodox pandits following closely the exegetical works of Hemadri and others, I shall have no quarrel with him or with any other interpreter.

**The one point of difference.**

30. There is, however, one point on which a real difference of view exists and should be made up. The Dewan Bahadur seems to accept, without any protest, the law of early gift or betrothal of girls as laid down in the Smritis. I cannot subscribe to it, even in the form given to it by his forced interpretation, as having equal and concurrent force with the Vedic law of adult marriage, for the reasons I have already stated in these pages,—*firstly* because it is not sanctioned by the Veda and is even opposed to it, and *secondly* because it may arrest the educational progress of girls and lead to many other evils associated with the current practice of early marriage, which has,

* *Vide supra* note on page 73.

among other things, led to precocity in the sexual development of boys and girls by putting into their heads too early the idea of conjugal relation. The early gift of a girl, as transferring (according to the Dewan Bahadur and the popular conception) the rights of the parents to the future husband, gives him such a control over her that he may prevail upon and even coerce her to join in a too early consummation of conjugal intercourse and thus put an early end to her education and orderly development.

**Early marriage and betrothal of girls presupposes exclusion from education.**

31. The law of early marriage in the case of women has become associated with the law of their exclusion from *vidya*, from all secular and religious knowledge, so that we can understand why Manu aud other law-givers of the post-vedic period, who exclude women from all knowledge and consign them to a life of dependence on men from birth to death, have prescribed an early age for betrothal and marriage. But as I have shewn above, the Vedic Law of marriage expects women to have been fully trained to enter, from the very day of marriage onward, on the life of responsibility (in the spiritual as well as temporal concerns) of Aryan householders, gives them perfect liberty to marry or not, and gives them the final voice in the selection of their husbands; so that the idea of gift or betrothal at an early age, long prior to marriage proper, is quite out of place in the Vedic ideal.

**Early betrothal is un-Vedic.**

32. A more direct proof of this can be given. The Baudhayana-Grihya-Sutra prescribes mantras to be recited by the sacrificial priest accepting the gift of a maiden when in the course of a sacrificial ritual her father gives her away according to the rules of the *Daiva Vivaha*, one of the four forms of marriage recommended in the Smritis for Brahmanas. The first of the six mantras reads thus :—

**प्रजापतिः स्त्रियां यशाः । मुष्कयोरदधात्सपम् ।**
**कामस्य नृपिमानन्दम् । तस्याग्ने भजयेह् माम् ॥**

"The Lord of Creation hath endowed the creative organs with the seed which, entering into the woman, grows to a glorious being, satisfying lust and causing joy. Grant here, O Agni, that joy to me."

*(Taittiriya-Brahmana, II, iv, 6.)*

This mantra shows that the maiden has attained maturity and is fit for immediate sexual intercourse. There can be no doubt that this is the meaning of the mantra, because the same mantra is used in connection with the sexual intercourse which is to take place on the fourth night after the Pani-grahana. Further, in the marriage hymn of the Rig-Veda (X. 85) wherein the typical marriage of Surya with Soma is decribed, it is said that Savita, the father of Surya, gave her away, on seeing that she appreciated the merits of the suitor and expressed a desire to be wedded to him. The law of early betrothal as laid down by the

Smritis is opposed to the Vedic ideal and should therefore be rescinded as soon as we can afford to raise the educational status of women.

**Reform the educational system and give up early marriage.**

33. Following the recognised tradition, I believe that the different Smritis are meant for different ages, and their laws therefore vary in tenor and substance, according to the social and political conditions of the people. Otherwise, there is no reason for the existence of so many Smritis. It will be a very interesting as well as instructive study to trace the several steps through which the Vedic ideal of marriage has passed in the post-Vedic period till it has assumed the form now in vogue. Such a study will shew that changes in the system of education of the youth in general, and in the educational status of women as affected by the economic and political conditions of the society, have led to the present customs of marriage. We had tnerefore better give up early betrothal and early marriage, both being alike opposed to the Vedic ideal; and with a view to this, it is necessary to raise the educational status of women and to introduce the principles of the ancient institution of Brahmacharya or student-life into the present system of the education of boys and girls. May God help us!

# II

## Some Papers and Notes on The Vedic Scheme of Marriage including Preparation for Marriage.

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# Marriage of Girls after Puberty.

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(*Preface to Mr. S. Venkoba Rau's Kanarese treatise on "Marriage of Girls after puberty."—July, 1909.*)

In compliance with the author's request, I have proposed to write this preface by way of introducing to the public his treatise on "*Marriage of girls after puberty.*" His study, like my own, of the marriageable age of girls as laid down in the Shastras was stimulated by the discussion of the subject in the Mysore Aryadharmojjivini Sabha about two years ago. The main results of his investigation are of the same tenor as those of mine presented in my "Vedic Law of Marriage," while his method of treatment, though slightly different, is in a way complementary to the one I have adopted. By insisting on a rigorous application of the recognised principles of Vedic exegesis to the interpretation of the shastric texts bearing on marriage, I have made out that the true law of marriage is the one embodied in the Vedic Mantras which constitute the scriptures of highest authority, and which clearly imply that woman as well as man should be married only after attaining the age of maturity when she may be able to realise the responsibilities of the householder's life,

and capable, by previous training, of fully discharging the duties pertaining to it. By an exhaustive collation of the Shruti and the Smriti texts bearing on marriage, Mr. Venkoba Rau has shewn that it is the marriage of girls after puberty which is distinctly prescribed by scriptures of highest authority, and that, when all texts are duly considered, the marriage of girls after puberty has a decidedly greater support of authority than the law of early marriage. He has, moreover, clearly stated, and satisfactorily answered from his own standpoint of view, all the objections which the modern orthodox upholders of early marriage with whom he has discussed the subject raised against the adult marriage of women. One merit of his treatise deserves notice: it is written, unlike most other treatises on the subject, in the vernacular of the province and is therefore likely to command a wider circle of readers among the people whom the subject of his treatment concerns most.

Those who have taken to a study of the Shastras on the question of marriage are confronted with texts pointing both to the early marriage of girls and to the marriage of adult women. The Vedic Mantras used in connection with the marriage ritual, and the ritual itself as laid down in the Grihya Sutras, clearly indicate that the ancient practice was to marry girls after puberty; whereas the Smritis, especially the later ones, specifically prescribe an early age before puberty as the marriageable age of girls. From these data of conflicting texts, several conclusions have been drawn:

(1) The Shruti and the Smriti being in conflict with each other regarding the marriageable age of girls and woman's status at the time of marriage and during her subsequent married life, the age of girls at the time of marriage and woman's status in married life are immaterial in the eye of the Shastras. All that the Shastras mean is that man and woman should lead a married life if, impelled by their natural instincts, they would come together for purposes of begetting children.

(2) The current law of early marriage laid down in the latest Smritis has been enjoined by sages who were masters of the Veda, and it must therefore be the one which is in accordance with the Veda. Though the Mantras apparently point to the adult marriage of women, still they must be interpreted in consonance with the law of early marriage. Such would be the true meaning of the Mantras, as made out by sages.—This is the position of the modern so-called orthodox pandit.

(3) The Vedic Mantras and the marriage ritual laid down in the Grihya-Sutras no doubt point to the ancient practice of adult marriage of women. It may be that at the time the sages thought that adult marriage of women was conducive to the best interests of the people. But later on, when the people have changed their modes of life, the sages in their wisdom have laid down in the modern Smritis laws suited to the present times and which cannot be changed without their sanction. No ordinary man of the world has any

right to change the existing law. Sages alone can do so.

(4) The Shrutis and the Smritis are mere records of the customs and the laws which prevailed at the times to which they relate. As framed by ordinary leaders of society of the day, they might have held sway at the particular historical periods and among the particular communities concerned. One is not more binding upon us than another, on the ground of its being more ancient or modern. What is expedient for the time and seems conducive to social progress is the law which we should follow. There is no force in the contention that we must be guided by the Shastras in these matters, or that what is laid down in the Vedas is, because of that fact, more binding on us than what is enjoined in the Smriti, when the latter happens to be in conflict with the former.

As against these conclusions, I maintain that if we would progress on right lines we should be guided by the laws laid down in the Vedas. The whole social fabric of the vast Hindu community rests on the wide foundations of the Shastras, whereof the strongest part is the Veda. The genuine shastras embody truths and laws whose wisdom is being daily demonstrated by the findings of the advancing modern science. We will not therefore be wise in wrenching our society away from its present foundations of a mighty antiquity which have stood the test of times and building it upon new foundations of our own laying. But what we call Shastras are made up of texts of

different values. The genuine portions of them embody truths and laws of highest value, which may justly claim to have been derived from the fountain source of Divine Wisdom; while again there are spurious additions and interpolations fathered upon the sages of lofty wisdom, but clearly indicative of the prejudices and idiosyncrasies of their real unscrupulous authors and quite unworthy of the holy names of the sages to whom they are attributed. Such additions and interpolations are found both in the Shruti and the Smriti. The genuine texts in our scriptures can be surely recognised through their content, bearing their clear mark as records of truths which the sages saw with their unprejudiced and unsophisticated minds, having no previously settled dogmas to uphold. Most of the *Mantras* connected with the marriage ritual are genuine, and in the form of these *mantras* the Rishis and other lofty beings, our ancient law-givers, gave utterance to the aspirations of the Aryan race and the laws as to the mode of life which the Aryan man and woman should lead as married householders. It is from these *mantras* that we should derive for our guidance the laws of marriage and married life, if we would fulfil the destiny marked out for the Aryan race by its pioneer leaders of far-reaching divine wisdom. Any law or custom which conflicts with these laws should be set aside as un-shastric and therefore unwholesome.

The genuine laws of marriage, which are also the most rational as agreeing with the facts and laws of nature we know of, are those embodied in

the Vedic Mantras, which must be understood in their natural sense, not with special reference to the laws laid down in the Smritis by authors who belonged to different schools, each laying stress on distinctive dogmas on some more or less important social and religious questions. These Mantras, when interpreted in their natural sense, give us to understand that at the time of marriage man and woman should both alike be of mature age and understanding, capable of setting up and managing an independent household from the very day of marriage. The law of early marriage for girls laid down in the Smritis now in force must be an aberration from the true Vedic Law, caused by the growing moral and spiritual weakness of the people, as described in the Itihasas and Puranas.

Certainly, no specific age for marriage is prescribed in the Vedas whether for man or for woman. Such a direction would mean either that every man and woman should as a matter of course marry and lead a married life, irrespective of their natural inclinations, or that, if they would marry at all, they should marry at a particular age or ages. Neither of these is comprehended in the import of the Vedic Law of marriage. The marriageable age has to be determined in quite a different way. It must be determined from the way in which the law of marriage operates and from the life laid down for the married couple to lead from the day of marriage onward. The very idea of marriage relation and the ideal life of the married couple held forth in the Vedic *Mantras*

are inconceivable unless the parties to marriage are fully grown-up adult man and woman.

Let us now see how the law of marriage operates in the course of human life. No Vedic injunction is called for to urge a man and a woman to unite together for the purpose of reproduction any more than in the case of lower animals. All men and women, with rare exceptions, have the sexual instinct implanted in them, which in time grows strong enough to bring about their union for procreative purposes. When the natural instinct prompts this union, then the Law steps in and teaches the man or the woman how, as a self-conscious intelligent being capable of purposeful action, he or she may improve the relation and make the best of it. The Vedic Law recommends that, instead of mating together like the brute creation at particular seasons for mere procreative purposes when impelled by instinct, man and woman must make up their minds to live together a constant and well-regulated life of activity in a joint household in life-long companionship. This vow, ratified in the sacred presence of divine personages invoked to witness and bless the union, constitutes what is called marriage. The law further enjoins that, prior to entering on married life, man and woman must have undergone a training for the life through a systematic course of moral, intellectual and spiritual culture and of physical austerities, and that, after marriage, they should live together in perfect harmony and love, with a view to realise man's oneness with the Divine—

working in unison in all concerns of life with common hopes and aspirations, discharging in full as one individual their duties to their fellow-creatures and to all sentient existence above and below man,—nay, embodying in their life the very Divine Law of self-sacrifice and love. These regulations will hold good only when the parties to marriage at the time of marriage have been impelled to live as man and wife by their natural instincts; and they cannot certainly apply when either of them is naturally averse to such a union and incapable of married life or does not fully understand the meaning of the marriage relation and the responsibilities of married life. It would therefore seem to be unnatural as well as unjust to marry boys and girls early in life before they have attained the age of maturity and thereby compel them, when grown up, to live as man and wife when either party happens by nature to be averse to such a life. We do occasionally come across men and women who are averse to a married life and inclined to a single life of spiritual devotion.

According to the Vedic Law of marriage, as stated above, woman, as well as man, should by the time of marriage be quite alive to the responsibilities of married life and should have been duly trained for a proper discharge of the duties devolving on her as a householder. The ideal marriageable woman, according to the Vedic Law, is one whose spiritual nature has been illumined by communion with Divine Soma,—the Lord of the manifested world,—whose emotions have been

purified and sweetened by the ambrosia of her devotion to the Divine Lord, and whose sense-organs and physical body have been washed, nurtured, and vivified by the waters of purified emotion and vitality,—as witness the words with which the Aryan bridegroom, when leading his bride to the altar or to the nuptial bed, accosts her in the following words:—

सोमः प्रथमो विविदे गन्धर्वो विविद उत्तरः ।
तृतीयो अग्निष्ठे पतिस्तुरीयस्ते मनुष्यजः ॥
सोमोऽददद्गन्धर्वाय गन्धर्वोऽददग्नये ।
रयिं च पुत्रांश्चादादग्निर्मह्यमथो इमाम् ॥

Soma had thee first, next had thee Gandharva;
Thy third lord was Agni, the son of man being thy fourth one.
Soma gave thee to Gandharva, to Agni did Gandharva give;
Wealth and progeny has Agni given to me, and thee here.

And at the conclusion of his address he expresses satisfaction that she has come to him with all this physical, moral and spiritual wealth, ready to bring forth progeny.

Such were the qualifications the Aryan man looked for in the woman who was to be his life-partner. Does it need saying that to grow into a lady of this culture, she must have passed through a regular course of intellectual, moral and spiritual discipline? Then, as the Vedic Law demands, she would be really able, from the very day of marriage, to reign in her new household as its queen and to direct with a masterly hand all its domestic and spiritual concerns. As a matter of fact, in the halcyon days of Aryan civilization, it was ruled

that woman should be given the same Vedic culture as man and subjected to the same moral, intellectual, spiritual as well as physical discipline in early youth, and that she should marry only after puberty when she had duly finished the prescribed course of study and discipline. She might not even marry at all, preferring a single life of exclusive spiritual devotion and culture to the semi-secular life of a householder. This insistence on early Vedic culture for woman as for man shows that under Vedic Law of Marriage the adult woman, not the child-girl, is regarded as eligible for marriage. It was the Aryan man and the Aryan woman of the ancient days, trained in this way, who, united in holy wedlock to lead the ideal life of married householders, gave birth to the Brahmarshis and Rajarshis of whom we read in the Itihasas and Puranas, those mighty giants of great moral and spiritual powers who carried all before them.

The current laws and customs of marriage and married life mark a wide depature from the Vedic ideal pictured above. A deep study of the literature bearing on the subject enables us to trace the causes of this departure. The causes are said to be the growing sensualism and greed of Dvapara and Kali,—the ages of intellectual doubt and darkness as well as moral turpitude,—which led to the neglect of the true laws of spiritual progress. The people in general have strayed far away from the ancient path of simple living and high thinking, and have become immersed in a life of ease and

luxury. Woman, who is physically the weaker of the two sexes, has been practically enslaved and denied all intellectual culture, destined to be a ministrant to man's sensual needs. If anywhere in these days she has come to occupy a dominant position in the household, it is because the sensualistic man has come to feel that he cannot do without her and has thus in turn become her slave.

If we as a people would grow strong and secure a place in the vanguard of the future civilization, we should closely follow the Vedic ideals of life. Abandoning the narrow road of selfishness paved with ease and luxury and leading to the abyss of misery, we men and women must gird our loins and run towards the well-nigh forgotten path of strenuous work and lofty spiritual aspirations, leading to the dimly visible goal on high of Divine power and wisdom and all-embracing love. May the Lord of all give us light and strength and so help us!

# Marriage as Sacrament.

*(A paper read at the Karnataka Theosophical Federation, Bowringpet, Mysore, on the 27th April 1912.*

**Evils in the existing Law of Marriage.**

1. Marriage is an oft-discussed question with us during this last half-century or so. Our increasing familiarity with the social institutions of the progressive peoples of the East and the West has opened our eyes to the peculiar features of our social system, and, among others, to those anomalous features which have made our civilization stagnant and unprogressive and have even led to its degeneration. It has been found that most anomalies are due to the existing laws and customs of marriage and the existing ideal of married life. The pitiable condition of the child widows who are doomed, much against their will in most cases, to life-long widowhood; the general illiteracy of the female population to whom all systematic intellectual education is denied by custom and by what is held as sacred law; the early parentage of boys and girls and the general constitutional enervation brought on by it; the general weakness and helplessness of women (in the poor upper classes) which dooms her to a slavish subordination to man;—all these are directly or indirectly traceable to the existing regulations of marriage and married life.

**The Vedic Law of Marriage.**

2. Those who have sought remedies for these evils have naturally looked into the original authorities on marriage. Our study of the Shastras including the Vedas, the primary authority on Sacred Law (Dharma), has shown what the original regulations of marriage were and how the existing customs and practices have been the resultant of adjustments in the original Laws adapted to the needs of a degenerating society. By a rational interpretation of the original Shastras it has been made out that woman as well as man is free to marry or not to marry ; that the remarriage of widows is not forbidden any more than the remarriage of widowers ; that girls ought to be educated just as well as boys; that marriage should take place between an adult man and an adult woman who have both in their youth had a suitable culture and training in the life of Brahmacharya, enabling them to understand the responsibilities of married life and to thoroughly discharge the sacred duties devolving on them from the very day of marriage onward ; that man and woman meet at the time of marriage on terms of equality as friends and maintain that position throughout their married life, sharing joyfully between them the sacred and civil duties of married life, and co-operating with each other as joint co-partners in life.

**Our attitude towards inter-caste and inter-racial marriages.**

3. Recently marriage has become a subject of hot discussion and controversy in connection with the well-known marriage bill of the

Hon. B. N. Basu, who thereby sought to legalise inter-caste and inter-racial marriages which are becoming popular among some of the highly cultured classes in this country. Naturally some of the orthodox Hindu opponents of the bill raised the cry of religion in danger, seeing that little or no importance was attached to the sacramental side of marriage and that the insurmountable barriers of caste and race set up by the modern orthodox Hinduism in all marital concerns were to be removed. Ever since the bill was introduced into the Imperial Legislative Council I have asked myself the question, what should be our attitude as Hindu Theosophists towards the question of inter-caste and inter-racial marriages? As true Hindus, following the Vedic Law, we cannot afford to ignore the sacramental side of marriage. Neither can we, as Theosophists cherishing the ideal of universal brotherhood, afford to let slip the opportunity which would furnish the means of bringing together, by the closest of human social ties, the cultured families of the several castes which make up the Hindu population, and of the cultured and progressive nations of the West and the East who hold in their hands an unbounded sway over the temporal and spiritual destinies of the earth's humanity. I have therefore propounded to myself for solution the question, "Is the Vedic ideal of marriage as sacrament inconsistent with inter-caste and inter-recial marriages which are productive of highly beneficent results from the standpoint of the Theosophist?"

**The Vedic Law in favour of inter-racial marriages.**

4. Thus led once more by the guiding star of Theosophy, I approached for an answer the sources of Vedic religion pure and simple, which to me is identical with universal religion based on Divine Wisdom. In the light thrown upon the question by the Vedic religion it is seen that unions by marriage of cultured individuals and families belonging to widely different castes and races will be nearer approches to the Vedic ideals of marriage and married life than unions confined within the limited circle of a few families affording no varieties of culture and temperament. This would seem to show that an understanding of the basic truth underlying the sacramental side of married life can alone lead to that lasting and wholesome union of all the progressive sections of humanity by way of bringing about inter-caste and inter-racial marriages among the cultured classes. This truth may elude the grasp of the careless student of Vedic Religion; and certainly he who is blinded by racial pride, religious bigotry and self-righteousness will fail even to suspect its existence. On the other hand, to the unbiassed student, such as a true theosophist ought to be, imbued with the spirit of universal brotherhood, and free from racial pride and religious bigotry and social prejudices, the truth will reveal itself in all its glory; and failure to comprehend it would only spell want of close study and attention on his part. I shall now proceed to shew how I have come to the conclusion that inter-caste and inter-racial marriages among

the cultured families of the East and the West are better fulfilments of the Vedic ideal of marriage as sacrament.

**The vulgar and sacramental aspects of marriage.**

5. Marriage is one of the most important of the Vedic sacraments. The vulgar and legal side of marriage and married life is quite familiar to us all, and I am not concerned with it now. It is the sacramental side of marriage and married life that I now propose to deal with as it is not generally understood by those who ought to know it. There is no need to discuss here all those functions which the married couple are to fulfil under the provisions of the civil law and the dictates of natural instincts. To these I refer at all here only to call attention to the different directive forces at work in the Sacramental and vulgar courses of life respectively. The vulgar or legal side of our life-activity is directed by personal interests, by the impulses and desires swayed by sense-objects in the external world. On the other hand, the Sacramental life is regulated by a higher law, by the will of the individual, the true man, his Higher Self, the ray or the reflection of the Divine Being, more fully reflected in the higher or finer nature of man than in the gross physical body and senses.

**Preparation for the holy married life.**

6. From this it will at once be seen that prior to marriage, the inner will of the individuals concerned must have already begun to work as against the natural impulses and instincts always

leading them towards the external world. In point of fact, according to Vedic Law, man and woman must prior to marriage have led for some years a life of Brahmacharya; that is to say, they must have learned to control their body, senses and mind. In early youth they are taught to recognise the existence of the Divine Being and their oneness with Him. They are made to see that the first step on the path of realisation of this oneness is devotion in doing service to the Divine Lord and His Agents with their body, senses and mind. With a view to efficiency in this line of work they try to make their organs strong, refined and obedient instruments of their will. They live on wholesome and non-stimulating diet, study laws of the world-evolution and spiritual progress; they meditate and worship and do service to their teacher as the visible embodiment of the Divine Being. This is a period of preparation for the spiritual life of the householder. Man and woman have thus learned what they will have to do as responsible members of the society. They have learned that their life-activities should be devoted to the Service of the Divine Lord (Prajapati) and His Agents,—Devas, Rishis, aud Pitris.

**Marriage as sacrament.**

7. With this preparation and equipment and with this aspiration it is that man and woman unite together in marriage. This determination to devote their purposes, thoughts and activities (for the progress of humanity) in the Service of the Divine Lord and His agents is known as *Diksha*,—solemn

consecration of life. Those men and women who have thus consecrated their lives to the service of the Lord (Prajapati, Brahman) may alone be called Brahmanas. The Vedic Law declares that birth in a particular family does not count in this matter. It is the life of spiritual devotion that makes one a Brahmana, to whatever caste or race one may belong. Union by marriage of two such people, man and woman, both true Brahmanas who propose to tread together the path of Divine Service, constitutes the Vedic Samskara of marriage described as *saha-dharma-charini-samyoga*.

**Brahmana as sacred fire.**

8. They are the people who in them have generated the Sacred Fire, Agni. Nay each of them is a Sacred fire, as described in the following verse :—

**अग्निः शुचिव्रततमः शुचिर्विप्रः शुचिः कविः ।**
**शुचीरोचत आहुतः ॥**

"Fire is he (the Divine in man) who is of purest purpose, who is pure in thought, who is pure in speech. Thus invoked, he shines in purity." (*Taittriya-Samhita, 1-3-14.*)

Pure in purposes, thoughts and deeds, the man and the woman, devoted to the service of Brahman and aspiring to realise their oneness with Him, are themselves the Sacred Fires. We will do well to realise how this is. Man's conscious life-activity involves three factors, will, thought (or Wisdom), and action (outward), all having their

source in the Divine Self in man. So long as our purposes as directed to our separate personal concerns as distinct from those of others, the Divine energy acting through us as purposes, thoughts and activities is broken up and scattered. When withdrawn from purely personal concerns and concentrated on the one Divine plan comprehending the whole universe, with a view to co-operate in its working, the Divine energy in man is brought to a focus. This concentrated intensified Divine energy in man is the true Sacred Fire of which the external Fire tended by the devotee is a symbol, chosen as such for its brightness and purficatory virtue in the physical world.

**Birth and growth of sacred fire.**

9. This Sacred Fire is generated and tended in early youth. When the youth, man or woman, proposes to enter on the larger life of spirit (Brahma) as distinguished from the narrower life of the body and senses, the very first thing that is taught by the spiritual teacher is the oneness of man with Brahman. **कोसि, को नामासि** ; "Thou art Brahma, thy designation is Brahma." Then the youth is asked to lead the life of spirit, and to give up the life of the body and senses, with which the vulgar identify themselves. Thus the student-life as well as the householder-life is called by the same name—*prajapatyasrama*, the life of devotion to Prajapati—the one being a preparation for the other; rather they are two stages on the same path, one being an extension or continuation of the other. Both may be regarded

as the life of Spirit as distinguished from that of the body which is to be used as a mere instrument —**शरीरं धर्मसाधनं**. As the energies playing through the mind, body and senses of the individual are focussed on Brahma, their primary source, the individual becomes an intensified manifestation of the Divine Energy and constitutes the Divine Fire. As the individual lives more and more *en rapport* with Prajapati (Brahma) he reflects the Divine Energy more and more fully.

**Marriage as union of two sacred fires.**

10. Thus marriage is a union of two Sacred Fires. In fact the holy married life, and the interaction of the two sacred fires generated in the sacrificial rite of Agnichayana, are described in the same terms. It is as fires that man and woman are addressed and address each other at the most solemn moment of union, when the bridegroom holds the bride's hand in his and leads her round the altar. The words are as follow :

**समितं संकल्पेथां सं प्रियौ रोचिष्णू सुमनस्यमानौ ।**
**इषमूर्जमभिसंवसानौ सं वां मनांसि सं व्रता समु चित्तान्याकरम्॥**

(Addressing the two fires the sacrificer says) :— "Walk ye and will in concert, beloved of each other. Feeding and growing strong together ye are united in thoughts, aspirations, and ideals."

**समयाव संकल्पावहै संप्रियौ रोचिष्णू सुमनस्यमानौ ।**
**इषमूर्जमभिसंवसानौ सं नौ मनांसि सं व्रता समु चित्तान्याकरम्॥**

(The bridegroom, addressing the bride, says) : —"Let us walk and will in concert, beloved of

each other, mutually attractive and well-disposed to each other. Eating food and gaining strength together, let us unite our thoughts, aspirations and ideals."

Thus when in the great sacrificial rite of Agnichayana the Ukhya-Agni, the Divine Fire without, is brought in union with the Fire in man (Garhapatya), the same mantra is addressed to the two fires. Here the individual soul just turned Godward is bidden to act in harmony with the Divine Lord, to direct his own purposes, thoughts and actions in the line of the Divine will. In marriage, the two Fires, which the true Brahmana bride and bridegroom really are, are exhorted to act in concert with each other. In both the Divine Fire has been engendered and nursed during the early student-life; and the husband and the wife are now exhorted to tend it and keep it burning. They should so act in their joint life as householders that, by their harmonious action in the service of the Divine Lord, the Divine Life in each may grow and attain fullest development. However different their individual temperaments and culture might be, they must act in concert with each other in the service of the Divine Lord and his Agents. As they have risen above the sway of impulses and desires, the difference in temperament and culture will be no bar to their concerted action; it might rather even help it.

**Gotra and its variety.**

11. The Vedic Law lays down that the bride and the bridegroom should be of different *gotras*;

that is to say, they should be of different religious temperaments, and the lines of their intellectual and spiritual culture should be different. I shall illustrate what this exactly means. The youths brought up in the modern cultured families of the advanced races in Europe, America and Asia who cherish different ideals of intellectual and spiritual education and culture may be said to belong to different gotras, each named after the founder of the particular system of intellectual and religious education, such as Bhrigu, Angiras, Vasishtha, Buddha, Krishna, Christ. Gotra represents spiritual pedigree, as distinguished from *Sapindya* or physical pedigree, as may be seen from the fact (among several others) that, according to the Shrauta Sutras, the Gotra of a Kshatriya is named after that of his spiritual teacher and guide—the Purohita. In the degenerate age of Hinduism, when true genuine spiritual culture went into the background giving place to meaningless formal ritualism, the spiritual pedigree has merged in the physical, and the Gotra of a man is necessarily named after that of the father, who, according to the existing rules, should formally initiate his son into the mysteries of spiritual life, though he may be the most incompetent person.

According to the Vedic Religion, there are seven Rishis or Divine sages who may be said to be the spiritual guides of humanity. They are the seven Gotra-Rishis, the founders of the seven different lines of spiritual culture leading to the realisation of the Divine Lord,—the seven ways

of engendering, tending and developing into maturity the Divine fire in man. The Gotra-Rishi and the Pravara-Rishi of a Gotra mark the great personages who adopted that particular line of development. He who, for instance, belongs to the line of Bhrigu invokes the sacred fire after the fashion of Bhrigu as the following mantra declares:

और्व भृगुवच्छुचिमाग्निवानवदाहुवे ॥

"I invoke the sacred fire like Aurva, like Bhrigu, like Apnavana." It is ordained that the bride and the bridegroom should, at the time of marriage, belong to two different Gotras, that is to say, should have followed two different lines of spiritual culture.

**Oneness of the Self with the Divine Lord.**

12. Though the prohibition of near physical consanguinity may be justified on scientific grounds, it is not so easy to see why the difference in Gotra or the line of spiritual culture is insisted on. Let us, however, try to find the reason. When there is a divergence in physical heredity, intellectual education, religious temperament, and spiritual culture, the meeting point of the bride and bridegroom must be sought on that level which is above all these regions of difference. They have to find it in the Divine Lord of the Universe in whom the two souls have their origin. If they do not recognise their union in the Divine Lord, their common source, they can never agree and unite in their life-work. When two such individuals of widely

different cultures and temperaments agree to live together for the whole life, it means that they are conscious of their oneness in the Divine Lord. Once their union in the Divine Lord is glimpsed forth, their individual variations cannot disturb their harmonious working. The variety will only add to the beauty of the harmony in their lives; this beauty reflecting the beauty of the Divine nature in which the while variety of the universe is harmoniously blended.

**Realisation of oneness with the Divine Lord.**

13. The necessity for variety in the Gotras of the bride and the bridegroom may be explained in another way. The Grihasthasrama is intended, as we have seen, for the realisation of oneness with Brahma, Prajapati, the Lord of Creation. There are seven paths leading to him, and these paths of spiritual culture are named after the seven Rishis who represent the seven aspects of Brahma. It would seem, then, impossible fully to realise Brahman along any one line exclusively. It is therefore necessary to assimilate something of the other lines while working along the main line to which the individual belongs. This assimilation can be brought about in successive lives by that intimate thorough-going intercourse with another soul of a different spiritual culture, which the married life implies. This assimilation of the alien lines of spiritual culture has to go along with the assimilation of the characteristic attributes of the opposite sex, which is also necessary for the realisation of Prajapati in whom both sexes are

combined. When the culmination of the sex-assimilation is reached, the man or the woman ceases to have any attraction for the opposite sex and is fit to enter on the Sannyasashrama, to renounce all personal earthly concerns and try to pass beyond the earth. This is perhaps the reason why the person who proposes to enter the Sannyasashrama is bound to perform Prajapat-yeshti beforehand. This would imply that the devotee has attained realisation of his oneness with Prajapati, or that he has fulfilled all the obligations due to the Hierarchy headed by Prajapati, which constitute the service of the Divine Lord, tending to the spiritual progress of the householder.

**Three lines of Divine Service.**

14. Three lines of service are marked out for the spiritual life of the householder: service to Devas, service to Pitris, and service to Rishis. The Vedic Law runs as follows:

**जायमानो वै ब्राह्मणस्त्रिभिर्ऋणवा जायते ब्रह्मचर्येण-**
**र्षिभ्यो यज्ञेन देवेभ्यः प्रजया पितृभ्यः । एष वा अनृणो यः**
**पुत्री यज्वा ब्रह्मचारिवासी ॥**

"A Brahmana, on becoming such, becomes indebted in three ways; by spiritual devotion (*brahmacharya*) to Rishis, by sacrifice (*yajna*) to Devas, by progeny (*praja*) to Pitris. Free from debt is he who has children, who sacrifices, and who leads students in the life of spiritual devotion."

These three orders of mighty beings are the guardians of the world-evolution, the agents of

Prajapati in the different departments of the Divine administration of the world-system. The house-holders who devote themselves to the service of Brahma (Prajapati) carry on their life-activities in co-operation with these three orders of beings. The householder may choose to work equally along all the three lines, or along only one of the three lines exclusively or more prominently than along the other two. It is with reference to this choice that marriage sacrament is called Brahma, or Daiva, or Prajapatya, or Arsha. When it is proposed to devote the married life to the service of Brahman in all departments equally, the marriage is known as Brahma. When one department of the service is chosen for exclusive or prominent attention, the marriage is known as Daiva, or Prajapatya, or Arsha according to the special choice. Service to Devas consists in developing faculties of knowledge and action relating to the visible and invisible regions of nature, in controlling and employing the forces of those realms for the benefit of the world at large and thus helping Devas in their work. Service to Prajapati or Pitris consists in raising noble offspring by leading a life of scrupulous sexual continence and chastity and bringing up that progeny in ways which conduce to their spiritual progress. Rishis are served by acquisition of spiritual knowledge and by handing on that knowledge to the posterity,—by teaching it to others. At marriage the bridegroom and the bride solemnly promise to unite their aspirations in devotion to the service of Brahma

(Prajapati) and to work in mutual co-operation and complete harmony throughout life.

**Inter-caste and inter-racial marriages.**

15. Let us now see the bearing of this view of marriage as sacrament on the question of inter-caste and inter-racial marriages. We have in this connection to bear in mind the two main conditions of marriage as sacrament: (1) Devotion to the service of the Brahma, Prajapati, the Divine Lord of creation, and (2) difference in the gotras,—in religious temperament and culture,—of the man and the woman to be united in marriage. As devotion to the service of Brahma, the lord of creation, makes one a brahmana, marriage between a man and a woman both devoted to the service of Brahma, to whatever caste, nation, or race they may belong,—is a marriage between Brahmanas in the true sense of the term, and fulfils the first condition of marriage as sacrament. They have recognised the inherent Divinity of man and, as the means to a realisation thereof, have consecrated their lives to the service of the Divine Lord. The second condition is fulfilled by the man and the woman having received in their youth due intellectual and spiritual culture along their respective lines The necessary differences in temperament and culture,—the differences in gotra—are better secured when the parties to marriage belong by birth to different castes, or different nations, or different races, and are brought up under different systems of physical, intellectual and spiritual culture. The national and racial

differences in these respects should be no bar to marriage. On the contrary, they will tend to secure the truest basis for marriage, namely, the recognition of spiritual unity amidst individual variations which relate to the unspiritual principles in the constitution of man. The harmonious blending of the individual variations in their joint life will only add to its wealth and reproduce in miniature the Divine harmony manifested in the universe so full of diverse elements. The main factor in the harmonisation of their joint life is their determination to act in accordance with the will of the Lord guiding the affairs of the universe. This determination, based as it is on the intuitive perception of man's divinity and of the inherent oneness of the soul with the Divine Lord, will not swerve under all changing conditions of life.

**Vedic Ideal to be spread broadcast.**

16. No doubt in these days very few families even in the most advanced sections of the civilised people cherish this high ideal of married life or are prepared to subject their youth to the training which forms a necessary preparation for that life. This shows in what line world-wide spiritual movements like the Theosophical society aiming at a practical realisation of universal brotherhood should work. It is incumbent on them to spread the ideal and to take practical steps to give to the aspiring youth that early training and culture which is preparatory to the spiritual life of the householder. It is true that even under the most favourable conditions such ideals will not likely

find acceptance except among the foremost and highly advanced ranks of the civilised races; but, judging from the rapid spread of the eastern ideals of spiritual culture in the old and new worlds, we may reasonably hope that the ideals will soon become popular among the upper and educated ranks of the civilised world, who alone can at any time rise to that level. Agreeably to this hope, his clairvoyant vision of the beginnings of the Sixth Root Race has revealed to Mr. C. W. Leadbeater to what extent the prevalence of these ideals will have brought about the union of eastern and western nations. Speaking of the social condition of India eight centuries hence, of which he had some glimpses, he says: "There is evidently far more mixture in the higher classes than there used to be, and much more inter-marriages with the white races, so that it is clear that among a large section of the educated people the caste system must to a large extent have been broken down."

**Weakness and disunion due to unspirituality.**

17. Our study of marriage as sacrament has thrown light on another important point in the social life of the Hindus. The modern Hindu suffers from a constitutional weakness, of which the effects are seen in all concerns of life. In spiritual life the modern Hindu does not exhibit that earnestness and devotion which should go along with it. His intellect is not virile and has ceased to produce anything original. His physical and moral weakness has led him to seek foreign protection and brought about his economical

dependence. Contrast this with the virility of the ancient Indo-Aryans who colonised, conquered and spread the Aryan civilization abroad. This change from virility to weakness is due to the change that come about in the working ideals of the public life of the Aryan householder; and it has brought in its train many social evils, not the least of which is the division of one people into innumerable castes separated by impassable barriers. You will presently see how.

**Spirituality tends to union and strength.**

18. The Indo-Aryans were all one people at first. They recognised only two classes of people, the Aryan and the non-Aryan (Dasyus), the cultured and the barbarian, the devout and the undevout, one passing into the other by elevation or degardation brought about by effort or neglect. The Aryans were all devout and cultured people, and constituted Varna, people who sought the higher life of spiritual devotion. In all departments of life, they aspired, dared and achieved. This virility was due to the early training to which the youth of both sexes were subjected as a preparation for the responsible life of public citizenship. We get a glimpse of the nature of this early training and culture from the rules of Brahmacharya given in the Vedas and Dharma-Shastras. The youth had to live a hard and simple life permeated by an ardent spiritual aspiration. The body and the senses were subjected to a strict regimen of food and conduct calculated to make them pure, strong, refined and obedient, to bring them under

complete control. It was in short a life in which physical austerity was combined with intellectual and spiritual culture, and which devoloped will-power to a high degree. It was a life of *tapas* as we call it. It was this life of *tapas*, this life of ardent one-pointed devotion to high spiritual ideals, which in ancient days preceded the married life, as a necessary preparation for the later life of the householder. As the Indo-Aryan youths of both sexes passed through this training and culture, they were known as Varna (*aspirants*) and Brahmanas (*devoted to spiritual culture*). Then the Indo-Aryans were all a virile people and carried all before them. The earliest specimens of people who constituted Indo-Aryan type are described in our sacred writings as follows:

असृजद्ब्राह्मणानेव पूर्वं ब्रह्मा प्रजापतीन् ।
आत्मतेजोभिनिर्वृत्तान् भास्कराग्निसमप्रभान् ॥

"God created at first Brahmans only, lords of existence, resplendent in their own spiritual lustre, brilliant like the sun and fire."

Such were the ideal brahmanas of power and glory into whose likeness the Aryans aspired to grow. So long as the aspiring Aryan youths were brought up in the life of brahmacharya, they were as a whole a mighty people.

**Unspiritual marriage and division of Varnas.**

19. As this early training of brahmacharya slackened, the later life of the householder lost its

orginal virility, and the people degenerated. As people of different degrees of *tapas* or spiritual ardour married with people of little or no *tapas*, the one Varna of the Aryans split up into several Varnas. As *tapas* based on spiritual aspiration for union with the Divine Lord gradually went into the back-ground, the people became weak and lost sight of their unity. The factors of separation, consisting in personal and class idiosyncracies, loomed large in their eyes and they have become divided into innumerable castes with insurmountable barriers between them. Thus disunion and weakness, so prevalent among the Hindus, are traceable to the defects in the early training of the youth. The origin of the several castes from out of the one original people, Brahmanas, is clearly traced in our sacred books. Janaka asks Parashara :

वर्णो विशेषवर्णानां महर्षे केन जायते ।
एतदिच्छाम्यहं ज्ञातुं तद्ब्रूहि वदतां वर ॥
यदेतज्जायतेऽपत्यं स एवायमिति श्रुतिः ।
कथं ब्राह्मणतो जातो विशेषग्रहणं गतः

The question is—" What is the cause of the distinctions in Varna, O great sage, I wish to know. Do thou, great Teacher, tell me. From the Shruti we learn that the child is the same as the father ; how is it then that those born of the Brahmanas have come to be looked upon as distinct classes of people ?

Parashara answers:

**एवमेतन्महाराज येन जातस्स एव सः ।**
**तपसस्त्वपकर्षेण जातिग्रहणतां गतः ॥**
**सुक्षेत्राच्च सुबीजाच्च पुण्यो भवति संभवः ।**
**अतोन्यतरतो हीनात् अवरो नाम जायते ॥**

"So it is, Thy Majesty. The child is the same as its progenitor. But by deficiency in *tapas* the child is regarded as belonging to a distinct class. From a good seed sown in a good soil comes a good offspring. When either of them is defective a degenerate offspring is born."

**Brahmacharya is the panacea for all social ills.**

From this we learn that want of *tapas* or spiritual ardour has brought about degeneration and division among the Aryans. Their regeneration can therefore be brought about only by a revival of the spiritual ideals of public life and by a training of the youth of both sexes in brahmacharya as a preparation for the life of the householder. Then the people will as a whole be virile and vigorous once more. This virility has been lost for thousands of years. Apastamba, who compiled the sacred laws of the Aryans about 2000 years ago, complained of the utter neglect of brahmacharya by the people of his day, the result of which was, as he said, that no *Rishis* or men of original achievements in spiritual, intellectual or even material fields could take birth among them:

**तस्माद्दषयोवरेषु न जायन्ते नियमातिक्रमात् ॥**

"Hence no *rishis* are born in the recent generations because of the transgression of disciplinary rules."

So, then, early training on the lines of brahmacharya is the panacea for all the ills of the Hindu society. That alone can eradicate the evil and restore the long lost vigor and vitality. May the Lord help us!

# Hindu Marriage Reform.

*(An English Version of the inaugural address in Kanarese at the first discussion meeting of the Mysore Hindu Marriage Reform League in 1913.)*

### 1. The object of the League.

Though this Marriage Reform League was organised here only a month and a half ago, its seed was sown about eight years back. In 1905 an association under the name of *Arya-Dharma-Ujjivini Sabha*—Association for the resuscitation of the true Aryan ideals of life—was formed, and many questions of socio-religious interest were discussed on the basis of shastras. The chief object of that association was to reform the existing Hindu social and religious institutions in accordance with the original authorities. One of the chief points discussed by the association was the marriageable age of the Hindu youth, of boys and girls. That discussion brought home to the minds of some that adult marriage both in the case of men and women is primarily enjoined in the Shastras. I am one of those who thought so and I have published my views in English and Kannada. Some others have even published books proving that the Shastras enjoin post-puberty marriage in the case of girls. The work of the Arya-Dharma-Ujjivini Sabha had to stop there. To carry out these views into practice it is necessary to form a league such as the one we have recently organised. The members of this

League are all persons who are convinced that too early marriages are productive of evil results and that the marriageable age should be raised as high as possible. Many of them know from their experience that many evils result from the custom of early marriages, and they are bent upon removing them somehow; while some others, viewing the question from the standpoint of both the shastras and experience, believe that early marriages are wrong. All these have now combined to determine how best to put a stop to the early marriages and the evils resulting therefrom. Such is the object of this League.

**2. Investigation is necessary.**

There are persons who approve of early marriages. They are of opinion that the shastras enjoin early marriages and that experience also shows that early marriages are alone wholesome. They form the majority of those who follow the custom of early marriages. As the custom of early marriages has been handed down to us by a long tradition, it is natural that those who view the custom with favour seek to preserve it without making any further enquiry. But in the case of those who have made a further enquiry into the question, a change has come about in their opinion. So that there is no doubt that in the case of others also such an enquiry may lead to a change of opinion. Before entering on an investigation of the shastras it is necessary to show to the people how experience shows that many evils arise from the system of early marriages. When these evils

are brought home to the minds of the people there will arise a doubt in them as to how such an evil practice of early marriage can ever be enjoined by the shastras. Then the mind will be ready for an investigation and will be inclined to enquire into the real meaning of the shastras.

**3. Evils of early marriage.**

Let us point out briefly some of the evils which our experience shows to arise from the system of early marriages.

(1) The chances of early widowhood with all its misery in the case of girls are so many.

(2) The education of girls is checked too soon by their early marriages From association with an uneducated wife, the husband does not derive all the advantages of a married life. All the happiness and gain derivable from his owu education does not accrue to the husband when living with an uneducated wife.

(3) By marrying boys and girls at an early age and consummating the marriage at 11 or 12 as soon as the girl has attained what is generally known as the age of puberty, both the husband and the wife become physically weak; their health is impaired; and they will be wanting in courge and spirit of enterprise. The offspring of such couples also will be wanting in those virtues and will gradually deteriorate.

(4) The women who give birth to children at a very early age are more subject to diseases and fatal maladies. They do not know the right ways of bringing up children, nor are they competent to

discharge the domestic duties that devolve on them.

(5) As there is a chance of giving birth to children from a very early age, the number of children is large and their mortality too is high.

(6) In the system of early marriages, the consent of the real parties to the marriage is of no account. The marriage thus contracted without their consent may prove to be a bar to their future plans of life. It will act as a damper on their future aspirations and prove a source of many an evil.

(7) By thinking, speaking and acting as husband and wife too early in life, their organs develop precociously and sexual passions are roused too early. This leads to an early exhaustion of the organic functions.

How can the system of early marriage, productive of such evil results as these, ever commend itself to thoughtful people? Once this point has been brought home to the mind, how can any one accept the system as enjoined in the Shastras?

### 4. Investigation of Shastras.

There are many among us who hold that early marriages, however injurious they may seem from a worldly point of view, must be wholesome as enjoined in the Shastras and that we should not act against the injunction of the Shastras. Such is the view held by the orthodox Hindus of the present day. We can wean them from this view only by discussing the Shastras with them. Does the Shastra enjoin early marriage

or adult marriage? This is the question we have to settle by a discussion of the shastras. But the orthodox leaders of the day say that there is no necessity for a fresh discussion of this question. It is quite natural for them to hold that there is no necessity for a fresh discussion of the question from the standpoint of the Shastras, when the immemorial custom of the brahmanas, the smritis like that of Parasara, and the exegetical works of Vijnaneshvara, Hemadri, Madhava, Kamalakara, etc., all go to prove clearly that the early marriage is alone enjoined in the Shastras. It is also natural for them to question the competence of the modern advocates of adult marriage on the basis of the Shastras as against the authority of Parashara and other authors of Smritis. But this attitude of the orthodox is not right. The truly orthodox thinkers whose sole aim is to know Dharma would not raise such objections. They do not deprecate any rational investgation of the Shastras. Apastamba and Bodhâyana define the truly orthodox attitude in the following terms: "The truly orthodox are devoid of envy and jealousy, of pride and egotism, of greed and covetousness; they are content with what they have; they are not self-righteous or vain, they are free from indiscrimination and other vices; they are persons who have studied the Vedas with Puranas and Itihasas and have understood the true Dharma after full enquiry. Such are the people who can know what is directly taught in the Vedas and who can direct the worldly affairs according to the

Vedic Law." Such are the truly orthodox leaders of society. It cannot be held that there are no such people among us here at present. Nor is it an act of temerity on the part of a modern investigator to try to establish the law of adult marriage to the satisfaction of such people, on sound lines of rational interpretation of the Shastras. Accordingly I shall proceed to indicate briefly the line of investigation followed by me in proving that the Shastras enjoin adult marriages; and I beg you will follow me with due attention.

### 5. Shruti and Smriti distinguished.

In this investigation we have to bear one point in mind. The institution of early marriage is based on one kind of authority, while the law of adult marriage is based on quite a different kind of authority. Smriti is the chief authority which enjoins early marriage, and the present custom among brahmans, too, supports early marriage. The authority for adult marriage is Shruti or Veda. All agree that, of Shruti, Smriti, and custom, Shruti is the highest authority. Those who know the exact nature of these authorities hold that the Vedic Laws always remain the same, whereas the regulations embodied in Smritis are all subject to change in course of time. Therefore, while the great sacrificial rites enjoined in Shruti have always remained the same, the regulations of *Varna* and *Ashrama* laid down in the Smritis have changed with changes in time and place and in yugas. Smritis themselves say that the Smritis which lay down the rules and regulations of *varna*

and ashrama are different for different yugas such as Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali. The reason is this : the Smritis only embody such rules and regulations as the leaders of the community following the Vedic Law frame in regard to the spiritual and temporal matters not expressly treated of in the Veda,—these rules and regulations having a special bearing on the time, the place, and the material and moral condition of the people concerned. It is these conventional practices that are codified in the Smritis. It is but natural that these practices change with changes in time and place and in the culture of the people concerned. Of such conventional practices of various kinds embodied in the Smritis which have been handed down to us in the course of ages, some will be found to be in accordance with the Vedic Law, while some others will be found to be in conflict with it. The Smriti which is consonant with the Vedic Law is regarded as genuine (शिष्टस्मृति) by the rational expounders of the Law, while the Smriti opposed to the Vedic Law is regarded as spurious (अपस्मृति). Similarly a custom (आचार) may be genuine (शिष्टाचार) or spurious (दुष्टाचार). In the case of marraige the Vedic Law is one and the same, while the regulations of the Smritis are various. The Shruti has not expressly prescribed a specific age for marriage. As to the proper age of marriage and other matters not specifically enjoined by the Shruti, the leaders of society have laid down regulations from time to time. The regulations laid down by the leaders of society have been different at different periods. We

should accept such of them only as are found consonant with the Vedic Law. If none of them are found to agree with the Vedic Law, it is but right that we should make new regulations in accordance with that Law.

### 6. Smritis vary.

In the conventional regulations embodied in the Smritis regarding such matters as the marriageable age, we find several divergences. In the case of men, the marriageable age varies from 16 to 50. The present practice of marrying boys below 16 is quite opposed to all Smritis. The brahmacharya or student-life of the boys of the present day is not even a shadow of what is enjoined in the shastras. In this matter there is a great divergence between the smriti and the practice of the present day. In the case of men, all—*i.e.*, the learned as well as the unlearned—are found to transgress the Shastras, as will be admitted by all. In the case of girls, the Smritis themselves are found to differ greatly from one another. For instance, the Parashara-smriti and some other smritis say that the proper age for girls to marry at is from 8 to 10, that the girl who has not been married before twelve is equal to a shudra and that no brahmin should marry such a girl. In the Smritis like the Gautama-Dharmasutra it is said that a girl must be given in marriage before puberty. Some Smritis declare that the girl who chances to show signs of puberty before marriage should be abandoned by the family. This last is the custom approved by the orthodox section of the present day. Our people nowadays

act on the belief that a girl may be married at any age before puberty. Some smritis allow that a girl who shews signs of puberty during the betrothal ceremony may be duly married after the performance of certain prescribed expiatory rites. In works like the Manu-smriti and Baudhayana-Dharmsutra it is said that the time for the betrothal of a girl in marriage extends for three years after puberty and that a girl not betrothed till then may herself choose a suitable husband and marry him without incurring any sin. The Harita-Dharmasutra enjoins that girls should be duly initiated into student-life through the ceremony of *upanayana*, that they should lead the life of brahmacharya, studying Vedas, worshipping sacred fire, and observing the vows of brahmacharya in matters of diet and physical cleanliness and general conduct, that they should close the student-life after the age of puberty and then marry. Harita distinctly says that no dvijas or twice-born can be born of women who have not had the physical, moral and spiritual culture of brahmacharya in early life. So divergent are the Smritis' ordinances regarding the marriageable age of girls.

### 7. Which Smriti are we to follow?

Which of these divergent ordinances we are to follow should be settled on certain approved principles of conduct. The Mimamsakas,—the expounders of our scriptures,—have after due consideration laid down the rule that where mutually divergent ordinances of conduct are laid

lown in the *Smritis*, we should follow that only which is consonant with the *Shruti*. On this all agree. On the question of marriageable age of girls, the Smritis' ordinances may be classified under three heads:—

(1) They should be married at some age *before* puberty.

(2) For three years after puberty, a girl may be betrothed by the parents and married to a husband of their choice. After that period, the girl may choose her own husband and marry him. But the most eligible time for the betrothal and marriage of a girl is some age before puberty.

(3) A girl should spend her youth in student-life, duly initiated into it through *upanayna*. She should study the Veda, observing the disciplinary rules of brahmacharya and close the student-life only after puberty and then marry.

We have now to determine which of these three mutually divergent ordinances of the smriti is consonant with the Vedic Law.

**8. Follow the Smriti consonant with the Vedic Law.**

The Shruti has not expressly enjoined the marriageable age anywhere. It only tells us what marriage is, what sort of persons are to marry, and how the married people should live. But when once these points are determined, the marriageable age is also determined by implication. We know that the several acts constituting the marriage ceremony are each accompanied with the recitation of an appropriate mantra or mantras (formulas). The object of uttering these mantras

is, in the enlightened orthodox view, to indicate the nature of the acts to be performed. So that the Vedic Law of Marriage and the Vedic ideal of married life should be determined from the mantras uttered in connection with the marriage ceremony. The Vedic Law of marrige applies to all Varnas alike; for all the dvijas or twice-born classes are to recite the same mantras, without any distinction of caste. The Hindus who do not belong to the twice-born classes, *i.e.*, the Shudras, should conform to the Vedic Law in their practices though they cannot recite the Vedic mantras. These mantras do not, according to the orthodox view, change with times. So that the Vedic Law of marriage as made out from these mantras applies to all ages as well as to all Varnas. The regulations which differ with different Varnas, with different Yugas, and with different countries are not among those laid down in the Vedas. From time to time, the people have made additional regulations of their own according to the social exigencies of their time and place; and these regulations reflect the intelligence and the moral culture of the people concerned. These regulations we may rescind or alter as may seem proper to us.

### 9. The Vedic Law of Marriage.

We shall now proceed to determine the Vedic Law of marriage from an examination of the Vedic mantras of marriage ceremony, so far as they relate to the question under consideration, namely, the marriageable age of boys and girls.

Let us look into the meaning of the words in which the bridegroom addresses the bride, in the most important part of the marriage ceremony. On meeting the bride, in the first act of the ritual, the bridegroom addresses her in the following words :

**गृभ्णामि ते सुप्रजास्त्वाय हस्तं मया पत्या जरदष्टिर्यथाऽसः ।**
**भगो अर्यमा सविता पुरन्धिः मह्यं त्वाऽदुर्गार्हपत्याय देवाः ॥**
**वीरसूर्देवकामा स्योना शं नो भव ॥**

"I seize thy hand to have a fine progeny, that thou mayst live with me, thy husband, till thou shalt attain old age. The Gods Bhaga, Aryaman, Savitri and Purandhi have given thee to me for householdership."

"Giving birth to heroic children, and devoted to Devas, be thou conducive to our happiness and well-being."

Again pacing seven steps with the bride, the bridegroom addresses her as follows :

**एकमिषे विष्णुस्त्वान्वेतु, द्वे ऊर्जे, त्रीणि व्रताय, चत्वारि मायोभवाय, पञ्च पशुभ्यः, षड्ऋतुभ्यः, सप्त सप्तभ्यो होत्राभ्यो विष्णुस्त्वान्वेतु ॥**

**सखा सप्तपदा भव, सखायौ सप्तपदा बभूव, सख्यं ते गमेयं, सख्यात्ते मा योषं, सख्यान्मे मा योष्ठाः ॥**
**समयाव सङ्कल्पावहै सं प्रियौ रोचिष्णू सुमनस्यमानौ ।**
**इषमूर्जमभिसंवसानौ सं नौ मनांसि सं व्रता समुचित्तान्याकरम्॥**
**तावेहि सम्भवाव सह रेतो दधावहै पुंसे पुत्राय वेत्तवै ॥**

"May Vishnu, the Supreme Ruler, follow thee in thy quest after (1) food, (2) vitality, (3)

spiritual life, (4) health, (5) wealth (cattle, etc.), (6) seasons' gifts, and (7) sacramental rites."

"Be thou my comrade in all these seven concerns of life. We have indeed become comrades in the seven concerns of life. May I retain thy friendship, nor mayst thou swerve from mine."

"Let us walk together and be united in all purposes of life. United shall we be in our loving and graceful deeds and good thoughts, enjoying alike food and vital strength. Let us unite our minds, our aspirations, our vows and all our thoughts."

"Come now, let us live together as man and wife and have progeny."

With some slight variations and with a few omissions or additions, according to the Vedic School to which they belong, such are the words addressed to the bride by the bridegroom when they enter into marital relations. They show what makes marriage a sacrament and what the status of the bride is at the time of the holy wedlock.

Man and woman are first brought together by sex-insinct; and when this union, instead of being a temporary one mainly concerned with its primary object, becomes an abiding one and extends to all the seven main concerns of life enumerated in the formula of *sapta-padi*, it becomes what is known as marriage, the typical form of friendship. When man and woman resolve to unite in life, harmoniously blending their several aspirations in temporal and spiritual concerns and dedicate the united life to the service of Vishnu,

the Divine Lord of love, grace and beauty,—service to the Divine Lord forming the background of all their life-activities,—their marriage becomes a sacrament. and their married life becomes one whole sacramental life. Such is the idea of marriage as sacrament conveyed by the words of marriage pledge quoted above. Do they not show that at the time of marriage the bride and the bridegroom must be adults, able to understand the full meaning of the words uttered? Can boys and girls of tender ages cherish such ideas as these words embody? Can these words be addressed by an adult bridegroom to a bride of eight or ten years of age? Those who can engage, at the time of marriage, in the acts of married life indicated in these words must be men and women of mature age. From the formulas uttered by the bridegroom when seizing the hand of the bride and leading her through seven paces, we learn that both of them understand the nature and functions of Devatas as also the nature and functions of married life. To live as friends from the day of marriage onward, there must be a mutual harmony between them in point of age, culture, and temperament. At the time of marriage they must be thoughtful persons so conversant with temporal and spiritual matters as to be able to engage in several important undertakings of temporal and spiritual significance such as the Vedic ideal of married life implies. It is clear therefore that the bride and the bridegroom must be a grown-up man and a grown-up woman eager to live as man

and wife and to raise a worthy offspring. From other mantras used in connection with marriage we understand further that they must at the time of marriage be able to set up a separate household and to manage its affairs independently. For instance, soon after marriage, pointing to the house which they are to occupy, the bridegroom addresses the bride in these words :

**गृहान् गच्छ गृहपत्नी यथाऽसो वशिनी त्वं विदथमावदस्व ॥**
**सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव सम्राज्ञी श्वश्वां भव ।**
**ननान्दरि सम्राज्ञी भव सम्राज्ञी अधि देवृषु ॥**

" Do thou enter the house, that thou mayst be mistress of the house. Take charge of the whole and be the mistress of the ceremonies."

" Be thou the queen (of the household), taking care of thy father-in-law, thy mother-in-law, thy sister-in-law and thy brothers-in-law.

These words give us to understand that the bride should be, even at the time of marriage, one who is conversant with the Vedic ideals of married life and able to rule the household affairs, to take a loving and protective care of the young and the old in the family,—one who has been duly trained to manage the temporal and the spiritual concerns of a cultured Aryan household.

**10. Education of girls is necessary.**

This study of the marriage *mantras* suffices for our present purpose. It enables us to determine the Vedic conception of marriageable age. It is clear that childhood is not a period fit for marriage. The Vedic mantras show that those

men and women alone are fit to lead a married life according to the Vedic ideal, who have learnt the duties and responsibilities of a Vedic householder and are of an age fit to duly discharge them independently. It is clear that the woman about to marry must be of an adult age, because she must have already been duly educated and trained for the due discharge of the householder's duties, and also learnt all about the Vedic laws and ideals of married life. This was the ancient custom, as stated by Yama, who says that the girls of ancient days led a student-life of the same kind as that of boys before marriage. Harita, as we have already stated, insists that till they attain maturity the girls of the *twice-born* classes should study Vedas, subject to the same regimen of brahmacharya as boys. They were, like boys, to be initiated into the Vedic study through the sacrament of *upanayana*; they were to be subjected to the same regimen of food and austerity, and they were to be taken through the same course of study, including the Vedas. Having had such a training as this, the Aryan girls of the ancient days were fit to discharge the duties of a householder as enjoined by the Vedic Law. We must follow the same system by adapting it to our present environment. Of all the several conventional systems which have been in vogue at different times as the different Smritis indicate, that which was in vogue in by far the most ancient period and recommended in the case of the twice-born girls by Harita even in comparatively modern days, is the only one which accords

best with the Vedic Law. At any rate the modern system of child-marriage is directly opposed to the Vedic Law.

### 11. The advantages of Adult Marriage.

Adult marriage alone accords with the Vedic Law, and is therefore the only true shastric course. Even from a worldly point of view it would appear to be a wholesome course for the people to adopt. The system of adult marriage will ward off many of the evils associated with the child-marriages of the present day. The advocates of adult marriages claim the following advantages:

(1) There will be no occasion for child widowhood, and there will be fewer chances of early widowhood.

(2) The education of boys and girls will not be interrupted as now.

(3) Overpopulation may be checked, and infant mortality and dangers of child-bearing may be reduced to a considerable extent.

(4) The progeny will be strong, virile, healthy, and of an enterprising spirit.

(5) The domestic life of the married couple will be of a high standard in every way.

(6) The married couple will be healthy and strong; mutual compatibility in age, culture and temperament can be secured; and their mental condition will be sound, not wanting in spirit of adventure, steadiness and perseverance, as is the case at present.

(7) Their civic life as householders will be marked by cultured and intelligent interest.

Thus from both the worldly and the shastric points of view the system of adult marriage appears to be wholesome in more respects than one.

### 12. The alleged advantages of early marriage are no real advantages.

Some think that the system of early marriages has its own advantages. On proper examination, all the alleged material advantages will be found resolvable into the avoidance of the trouble of maintaining the daughter for a long time and into the securing of some material advantages for the daughter or her parents. It is by no means proper for the parents to sacrifice the daughter's health, culture and all preparation for her future progress, from a desire to secure wealth for the daughter or for themselves, or to avoid their own trouble of bringing her up till she grows up into a woman. According to the Vedic Law they should bring up their daughter in her childhood with a loving care, educate her in her youth, teaching her such sciences and arts that will make her an efficient manager of her future household, and then marry her to a worthy man. Is it then right and proper for the parents to marry their daughter before she is eight or ten to a young unproven lad of immature mind and character, or to regard her at eleven or twelve as mature enough to live with the husband and become a mother in another year or so, or to consign her thus too early in life to the tender mercies of the elder members of the husband's family who can have no natural affection for her,—while she does not know how to take

care of herself and the children she may bring forth, undergoes all kinds of suffering and finally becomes a prey to consumption and other serious physical and mental maladies? Is it right for the parents to look upon it as a trouble to bring up children up to a mature age, to educate them well and to guard them from evil ways? Is it right and proper for the parents to expose their children to the many evils of early marriage with a view to sparing themselves the trouble of bringing up their children in youth or with a view to gaining some material advantages either for themselves or for their children? It is from ignorance pure and simple that some of our people regard these features as the advantages of early marriage. The Aryans are not by nature so hard-hearted. It is only their ignorance that has made them regard early marriage as enjoined by the Shastra, as conducive to the happiness and well-being of their children, or to look upon its occasional seeming material advantages as really beneficial. Even a slight reflection on the subject will dispel this misconception. Why, are there no people even among us who follow the system of adult marriage? Is domestic happiness wanting among them? In what way has the system appeared to them injurious or troublesome? On the contrary, it is they who follow the custom of early marriage that find it very difficult to secure proper husbands for their daughters in time. Why should we tie ourselves to the system of early marriage which is opposed to the Veda, and which is the manifest source of

so many evils? Why should we not revive the ancient system of adult marriage which is consonant with the Vedic ideal? We who profess to follow the Shastra are bound to do so.

**13. Curtailment of marriage expenses.**

One more advantage of very great importance accrues from the marriage reform on Vedic lines. Among the existing customs relating to marriage there are several which have no basis in the Shastras, and which involve a great deal of worry and an enormous expense of time and money. If we would follow the primary authority of the Veda, we might modify many of our expensive marriage customs or dispense with them altogether. We may determine what are the essential integral parts of the marriage sacrament and adhere to them alone in practice, while observing or omitting, according to our convenience, the remaining parts which are purely secular. By thus regulating our marriage ceremonies according to the Vedic Law, we will be able to curtail the marriage expenses to a considerable extent; and the curtailment of the marriage expenses is one of the main objects of this League. It is therefore one of the very necessary duties of this League to determine by an investigation of the original Vedic authority the essential portion of the marriage sacrament and to enlighten the public on the point.

**14. The abolition of bridegroom-price.**

I may refer here to yet another great advantage of the Vedic system of adult marriage. It may lead to the abolition of the evil of bridegroom-

price. At present, because we have to marry girls at a very early age before puberty while there is no such limit of age in the case of men, the parents of girls have to induce bridegrooms, by offer of large presents and dowries, to marry their girls before they come of age. This necessity has led to enormous additions to the expenses of marriage in some parts of our country. By adopting the Vedic system of adult marriage of girls, the parent's anxiety as to the expiration of so short a marriageable period will be effectively removed. The parents will afford to wait till a proper bridegroom will be available. In that case, there will be an equal necessity on both sides. The parents will then have no necessity to marry their daughter to any man or boy that may be available at the time. Out of the amount which is now paid as dowry or present to the bridegroom at the time of marriage or as contribution to his future education, a portion may be spent on the education of the girl suited to the times. A girl properly educated in youth and scientifically trained for the discharge of all the responsibilities of her future life as householder is alone fit for marriage under the Vedic Law. Such girls will be sought for marriage by men who are themselves duly qualified for the life of the householder. Happy indeed will be the married life of men and women who are equal in intelligence and moral culture, equal in age and training. Even if she could not find a suitable man to marry, a well-educated woman would be able to live by herself without the help of others. The

parents need not feel so anxious about her as now. Some thoughtful women, in virtue of their culture, are sometimes found to prefer a life of celibacy to married life; and to such people the system of adult marriage will afford a chance of following their noble aspiration.

**15. The main point at issue.**

We have seen that the system of adult marriage is consonant with the shastra and wholesome to the people. The points which have but briefly been touched here will be explained at great length one after another from time to time in the form of lectures. Though the line of investigation adopted here is based on the principles laid down by the exegetists of old, it may appear somewhat new to the present generation of indigenous scholars. For, the recent expounders of socio-religious law—such as Hemadri, Madhavacharya, Kamalakara Bhatta, Vaidyanatha-Dikshita, Vaidika-Sarvabhauma—have for their main object the determination of the conventional rules and regulations handed down to us in the form of *smritis*. But the determination of such conventional regulations is one thing, while the discussion as to whether those regulations are consonant with the Vedic law and wholesome to the people concerned is quite a different thing. The aim of the digest-writers mentioned above is to reconcile the varying smritis and to settle the conventional rules which people have to follow, without discussing the merits of those rules. In our present investigation we do not discuss whether or not such conventional rules as are handed down to

us are as laid down in the smritis. Our main concern here is to determine whether the conventional regulations handed down to us by *Smritis* and *Acharas*, by written and unwritten tradition, are in accordance with the Shruti and are wholesome to the people. The digest-writers such as those mentioned above have not entered on such discussion. They have all followed the traditional rules and regulations without any such discussion. These rules and regulations have gone on changing from time to time little by little till at last they have taken different forms some of which are opposed to the Vedic Law and to the system primarily based on that Law. Now our social environment has considerably changed and with it the educational system; and the educated people who have been trained in the modern methods of culture which are somewhat different from those of the indigenous culture see many evils in the existing social institutions and have begun to enquire into the origin of those institutions. Once such a spirit of enquiry has been roused, it is not possible to stop it. No man of culture can possibly reconcile himself to the modern social institutions without any enquiry. Those who wish to preserve the existing institutions have therefore to establish their merits by appeal to reason: they cannot attain their object by merely ignoring or—what is worse—abusing those who condemn our modern social institutions on rational grounds. It is therefore necessary for both parties to investigate the origin of our existing social institutions such as marriage.

In all our investigation concerning marriage and allied institutions we must ever keep in view the main object of enquiry: we have to determine what conditions will facilitate the adoption of that system of marriage which is shastric and wholesome to the people.

### 16. The whole of Varna-âshrama-dharma is to be investigated.

Though marriageable age is the main subject of enquiry at present, our investigation of the shastra will not end with it. For, when the Vedic Law is found to enjoin adult marriage in the case of women, we will naturally enquire how the followers of the Vedic Law, such as we have always professed to be, have come to adopt the system of early marriage. An enquiry into the origin of the early marriage of girls will make it clear that, when the brahmana families ceased to employ Aryan Shudras for domestic service, including cooking, as they used to do before, the whole of domestic service fell to the lot of the brahmana woman; that as a result of this change in her economical status any systematic intellectual education was thought unnecessary for the brahmana woman; and that therefore in the case of girls marriage and married life has come to take the place of the *upanayana* and student-life of boys. This will lead to the further enquiry as to what is the real nature of the fourfold division of varna, what ought to be the mutual relations of the four varnas, how they obtained in the early stages, and how they have changed later on, and

so forth. As the enquiry will further show that marriage is optional for woman as well as for man, we will be led to enquire into the true nature of each ashrama (holy order of life) and the relations between the different ashramas. Thus the whole institution of Varnashrama will come within the scope of our investigation. We will then have to enquire into the relation between Religion or Dharma in general and the regulations of varna and ashrama in particular; and this will lead also to the enquiry into the nature of Dharma in general. Further we will have to discuss the nature of Brahmacharya, the spiritual life of the student preceding the time of marriage, as also the duties of the householder after marriage, the duration of the householder-life, and so forth. It is said in the Manu-Smriti that the householder is the refuge of all ashramas, because—it is explained in the Manu-Smriti—all the ashramas or holy orders derive their sustenance from him and are thereby enabled to carry on their duties. Another reason for the statement may be conceived in accordance with the system of Varnashrama-Dharma. It is by following the life of brahmacharya that one becomes qualified for a due discharge of the duties of the householder-life. The order of Brahmacharya is intended for this purpose. He who has spent his middle life in discharging the duties of the householder-life should enter the life of Vanaprastha (forest-hermit) or of Samnyasin. Thus all the other ashramas are related to the Grihastha-ashrama;

Brahmacharya is a preparation for the house-holder-life which in turn is a preparation for the other two. Thus in our study of marriage we will have directly or indirectly to turn our attention to almost all the subjects comprehended in our *Dhaama Shastras* or sacred institutes.

**17. Social Reform should be based on the shastras.**

For those who seek to guide their life according to the shastras, a study of shastras is quite necessary. We should spare no trouble in ascertaining the real teaching of the shastra. Without a study of the shastras we cannot ascertain what the shastra really enjoins, how much we ourselves have added to it, and how far we may change our institutions in accordance with the shastras. It is for want of a propor study of the shastra that meaningless customs as well as false and evil ones have been blindly incorporated in our socio-religious life. Where there is no proper study of the shastras, whatever evil customs the accredited leaders of society have consciously or unconsciously fallen into become the recognised customs of the society, which the masses follow without any enquiry into their origin. In this way many objectionable practices have been incorporated in the institutions regulated by the Shruti and the Smriti. It is only by a rational investigation of the shastras and other authorities that we will be able to discriminate and eliminate these evil practices. It is only by an investigation of the shastra that we should now determine which parts of our institutions are enjoined by the shastra proper and are

therefore essential, which parts can be modified, and which parts are to be removed. It is not right to change wholly our institutions without such investigation. If we go on reforming our institutions in accordance with the findings of such investigation there is a chance of the wholesome parts of our institutions surviving this period of transition. We find that many an evil result from our blind continuance of objectionable customs. We also find that more evils arise from freely changing or giving up our customs according to our whims and fancies. It is with a view to avoid these evils that the Marriage Reform League in Mysore has proposed to devote one or two hours every week to discussions and lectures on such subjects as the system of of Marriage, Varnashrama-Dharma, Dharma in general, and so forth, and to publish the results for the benefit of the people at large through pamphlets and Magazines. The members of this League pray that all our educated people will encourage this undertaking.

**18. Immediate measures of Marriage Reform.**

It is a work of time to bring home to the minds of the Hindus, to the learned and the unlearned, the ideas that child marriage is not shastric and is unwholesome to the people, and that the adult marriage alone is shastric and wholesome to the people. But this League must try and remove some at least of the evils of early marriage by introducing atonce some of the wholesome features of the Vedic Law of marriage on the following lines:

(1) To teach to the boys, along with secular subjects, the high Vedic ideals of married life, and to postpone the consummation of their marriage—where they are already married—till after they have completed their student-life.

(2) To put off the marriage of a girl as long as possible, and in no case—though her betrothal has taken place before puberty—to consummate marriage before she is at least sixteen years old.

(3) To give the girl a proper systematic education on scientific lines, to teach her the high Vedic ideals of married life and to train her for the discharge of the duties and responsibilities of the householder-life before she actually enters on the duties of that life.

(4) To teach to the people that the demanding of high bridegroom and bride prices is condemned by the shastras and is quite derogatory to the dignity of marriage regarded as a sacrament, and thereby to try to remove the evil custom.

(5) To impress upon the parents that in the matter of their children's marriages they should aim not only at securing their own ease and pleasure of the moment but also at the true well-being and progress of their children, as well as of the offspring of those marriages.

If our attempts are directed chiefly towards the effecting of these much needed reforms, there is no doubt that the Vedic Law of adult marriage will soon appeal to the people at large and will come into general practice at no very distant time.

# The Ancient Hindu Ideal of Education.

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*(A paper read at the meeting of the Mysore Education Union held on 25th March, 1914.)*

" To-day our country and her *Dharma* are in a sore plight, and in a special manner she calls on her daughters at this moment to come forward, as those in the ages before, to aid her with great *Sraddha*. How shall this be done? we are all asking. In the first place let Hindu mothers renew in their sons the thirst for *Brahmacharya*. Without this our nation is shorn of her ancient strength. No country in the world has an ideal of the student's life so high as this, and if it be allowed to die out of India, where shall the world look to restore it? In *Brahmacharya* is this secret of all strength, all greatness. Let every mother determine that her sons shall be great! . . . . ."—Sister Nivedita in " *The Civic and National Ideals*," p. 71.

**The genuine Hindu ideal of education.**

1. By the ancient Hindu Ideal of Education I mean the system of training and culture under which the ancient Indo-Aryan youth were brought up. On the system primarily are based the medieval and the modern Hindu indigenous systems. No doubt these differ in several points from each other and from the ancient system. But the real purposeful Hindu ideal was the most ancient system, the principles of which have to be gathered from the original shastras,—from the Vedic formulas and rules relating to the student-life of the ancient Indo-Aryan Youth. The medieval and the modern systems are for the most part more or less ritualistic and symbolic representations of the real living process of the ancient spiritual education, and are in most cases mere semblances thereof. If we would grasp, for any purpose, the

genuine Hindu ideal of education, we should take up the most ancient one for an intelligent study. I dare say that such a study will repay all the pains that we may bestow upon it.

**The ancient Hindu and modern ideals contrasted.**

2. In any well-organised society the education of the youth must be a preparation for the future civic life of the man. Accordingly, among the ancient Hindus, too, the education of the youth was a preparation for the civic iife of the grown-up man. The civic life of the ancient Hindu was wholly based on a spiritual groundwork; it was intended as a means to his spiritual growth, his whole temporal life being made entirely subservient to his spiritual interests. The temporal well-being and success were sought not for their own sake but only in so far as they might furnish favourable conditions for spiritual growth. This is, of course, in seeming contrast to the modern working ideal of civic life. The civic life of the modern communities is largely, if not exclusively, governed by considerations of temporal interests, and, has, if any, only a thin veneer of a spiritual amalgam. There being such a contrast between the ancient and modern ideals of civic life, we may expect a corresponding contrast between the ancient and modern systems of education, which both alike profess to prepare the youth for the future civic life. While, therefore, in the ancient Hindu system, spiritual life formed the groundwork of the education of the youth, the time and attention given to it in the modern system are

very small indeed in proportion to its cultural value in the education of a truly civilised man.

**The ancient Hindu ideal of civic life.**

3. What was then the ideal civic life for which the ancient Hindu youth was to prepare himself? The typical Indo-Aryan is not satisfied with the mere animal life of the body and the senses that had been led by the race of people he has left far behind. He looks upon it as perishable and aspires to live an immortal life. To such a man the Vedic teaching is addressed. According to the first command of the Vedic Law, the aspirant of the immortal life shall seek fellowship with the Divine Lord of the Universe. He shall know of the divine Lord's plan of the world-evolution with a view to co-operate in it and thereby attain unity with Him. The civic life is to him only a means to the attainment of this unity. It is a field of action in which he is to realise his fellowship with the Divine Lord by co-operating with Him, *i.e.*, by doing his best for the well-being of the whole society in which he lives. This was a living ideal with the ancient Hindu.

**The purpose of the ancient Hindu system of education.**

The education of the ancient Aryan youth was a preparation for this kind of civic life. The main purpose of his education was, therefore, to make him understand and realise, partially at least, the true immortal divine nature of himself; to make him know that he was not the bodily organism called man, that the true man was an emanation of Brahman, the Divine Lord, as the

spark is of the flame, having in him all the divine potentialities; that he had to begin developing those potentialities into actual powers amidst the conditions of his temporal life. The youth was placed under a regimen of life which would conduce to at least a partial realisation of this truth.

**The spiritual teacher to be sought.**

5. The ancient Hindu youth, when old enough to observe the rules of student-life, *i.e.*, to lead the hard physical life of *brahmacharya*, was sent to a spiritual teacher with whom he might reside as a student till he was able to lead an independent life. The ideal teacher was one who was born for the profession, who took kindly to the vocation of a teacher. He was learned in the spiritual knowledge of the time and was leading a spiritual life. The spiritual teacher would not refuse the candidate unless the youth was guilty of a heinous sin.

**Brahmopadesa.**

6. The first instructions to the accepted pupil may be gathered from the ceremonial process of initiation laid down in the Vedic writings. Approaching the teacher, the youth announces his intention to lead a spiritual life: **ब्रह्मचर्यमागाम्, ब्रह्मचार्यसानि.** On accepting the pupil, the teacher tells him that he is no longer to identify himself with the bodily organism; he says to him **कोसि कोनामासि,** "Thou art that undefined one, the Brahman;" and he continues: "thou shalt lead a life of Spirit in complete devotion to Prajapati, the Lord of Creation, if thou wilt realise Him. Look on me

the intiator, and thyself the initiated, as one with the Brahman to whom I lead thee." In these words the teacher impresses the spiritual unity of the teacher and the pupil with the Divine Lord of Creation. Thus does the teacher, seizing the pupil by the hand, tell him the meaning of the step he has taken. The pupil has now proposed to live the life of Spirit in the body in entire devotion to the Supreme Lord. To such an aspirant of spiritual life the real teacher, as the teacher says, is Agni, that divine flame within the pupil whereof he is a spark, and which he will be shewn how to kindle; while the human teacher is a teacher only as pointing out the way to the true divine teacher.

**Upanayana.**

7. Then the teacher leads the pupil nearer to himself and makes him over to the gracious protection of Agni and Indra, the guardian angels of strength and grace, of Prajapati and Savitri, the Lords of Creation, and of all other angelic hosts of heaven and earth. Having committed the pupil to such divine protection, which will keep off all evil from him, the teacher delivers to him instructions as to the life to be led during his residence with the teacher. Brooding over the instructions as to the true nature of his Self, and strong in the faith that he is under the protection of the guardian Devas, he is to prepare himself for the life of Spirit.

**Brahmacharya.**

8. The teacher says to the pupil: "Drink enough water; be active; kindle the fire: don't sleep; obey

the teacher; restrain speech; study the Vedas." This is explained as follows. The pupil has first to assert control over the body and the senses. He should not indulge in luxuries of any kind. He should avoid all rich and stimulant articles of food. He should be ever active in the personal service of the teacher and thereby develop strength. He should restrain speech or study the sacred scriptures. He should kindle the sacred fire: that is to say, by brooding over his own true Self as one with Divine Self he should kindle the Divine flame within and thereby infuse strength and power into himself. He should never sleep, never lose sight of his true spiritual Self. To lose sight of the spiritual Self is to die unto one's own true Self. Concentrate thy attention of thy true Self and take thy stand there. To this end, abstain from all rich and stimulant food; only drink water as you please. Thus shalt thou live the immortal life. This is called *brahmacharya* or spiritual life of the student. The rules of brahmacharya are laid down in somewhat greater detail in the later works on Aryan Sacred Laws. According to Apastamba, they may be stated as follows:—

"Obey thy teacher in all but sinful counsels; work for the good of the teacher; never contradict him; occupy a lower seat in his presence; never feast thyself; avoid all pungent food, salt, sweets and liquors, and flesh. Never sleep in the daytime. Do not use fragrant essences; avoid all sexual intercourse; do not care for bodily brilliance; be content with keeping thyself clean. Do not indulge

in luxurious baths. (Here some instructions are given as to hair-dressing, dress, belt, upper cloth, and the staff.) . . . Never resort to dancing stalls, or huge concourses of people. Do not gossip about people; always resort to retired spots. Do not engage in thy personal ablutions where thy teacher moves about. Talk to women only as much as is necessary. Be gentle, peaceful, self-controlled, modest, steadfast, untired, without anger, without envy. Give all thy earnings to the teacher and do him all the personal service you can. This service to the teacher is the pupil's highest divine worship, the *guru* being for him the embodiment of God. Be ever on the alert to guard thy teacher from all harm, and kindle the sacred fire everyday."

**Gayatri, the sacred word of power.**

9. When this life of brahmacharya has been led for a year, then the body, the senses and the mind are purged of all their impurities and then the life of Spirit or Higher Self manifests itself through them. The pupil, thus awakened to the light of Spirit shining within him, glimpses forth his real spiritual Self. Through the ray of spiritual light shining within, the pupil can rise up to its source, the spiritual Sun enlivening the whole nature. Then is the time for the teacher to give to the pupil the Gayatri-Mantra, the sacred word of power. By constant meditation through the Mantra on the Supreme Light of the Spiritual Sun, the Mantra becomes a very potent weapon, armed with which the devotee can withstand all the powers of darkness (asuras) that may ever assail him.

With this Mantra every Aryan prays thrice every-day to the Divine Lord for strength and guidance; and fighting in the strength vouchsafed to him he hopes to win in all struggles of life.

**Spiritual birth.**

10. This marks the birth of Spirit in the pupil; and as having caused the birth of the real Self of the pupil, the teacher is regarded as his true father, and to that teacher he pledges his troth. Thenceforth the pupil bears also the teacher's name marking his spiritual pedigree, *gotra* as we call it. This spiritual birth of the pupil has made him a true *brahmana*, of a real spiritual significance. In some pupils this birth takes place, as the Shruti says, after a year's life of brahmacharya: in others it may take place in six months, in twenty-four days, in twelve, six, or even three days. The period is long or short according to the impurity to be purged away, a year being considered long enough for an average Aryan. It is, however, said in the Shruti that the Gayatri-mantra may be given at once to the Brahmana child, *i.e.*, to the child born of parents who have lived a spiritual life all along, *i.e.*, again, to the child who has been born and brought up all along in a pure physical, moral and spiritual atmosphere. In the case of such a pupil, the spiritual child is born in him as soon as the teacher tells him of the true nature of his Self, and the mantra is given to him forthwith. Thus is the pupil initiated into spiritual life.

**The Sacrament of Upanayana.**

11. This real process of initiation is represented by the modern Hindu Sacrament called

Upanayana, whose significance is but vaguely understood. It will be interesting to identify the several parts of the sacrament with the several steps in the real process. The teacher telling the pupil of the true nature of his own real Self as one with Brahman is the *Brahmopadesa*. The teacher's acceptance of the pupil and leading the pupil to the Divine Lord and the guardian Devas for protection is called *Upanayana*. The regulated life of the body and the senses and the mind subject to the will of the Spirit behind, and the active life of personal service to the teacher as the visible embodiment of the Supreme Lord constitutes *Brahmacharya-vrata*, the life of spiritual devotion, which enables the pupil to feel the immortal life, the true power, and the ever growing light of the Spirit behind. The giving of the word of power to the spiritual child in the pupil is the *Mantropadesa*.

**Spiritual and secular studies.**

12. Endued with this spiritual light, power and strength, the ancient Hindu youth pursued his studies in preparation for his future life in society. It was believed that this spiritual regeneration on the Vedic system conduced to efficiency in all studies; **उपनयनं विद्यार्थस्य श्रुतितः संस्कारः**. These studies varied according to the natural aptitudes and tastes of the youth and to the demands of social efficiency. Among the ancient Hindu youth there were some who had no zest for temporal life at all. Such students confined their attention to the spiritual studies solely, and even after completing their usual study remained as spiritual students

with their teacher throughout life (नैष्ठिकब्रह्मचारिणः) dedicating themselves to the service of the spiritual teacher. Some of them, after completing the study, lived an independent life as forest-recluses, living a life of nature away from the civil population of towns and villages and pursuing their spiritual exercises exclusively; while some others became *sammyasins* who gave up all conventional socio-religious walks of civil life, and devoted themselves entirely to the acquisition of spiritual knowledge. These three classes of celibates formed of course a very small minority of the population, while the large majority looked for temporal careers as householders in society (grihasthas) and aspired to pursue them in the spirit of the Vedic Law, as a means to the spiritual progress, as service to the Divine Lord, *i.e.*, with a view to realise in social life their unity with Him. Such careers were once classified broadly under four heads: the career of (1) the priest or teacher, (2) the ruler or warrior, (3) the producer and distributor of wealth, and (4) the manual labourer. Aiming at one of these careers, the student would train himself for it, living a life of brahmacharya so long as he remained a student. The time for spiritual and secular studies was duly apportioned. About four months between the close of the rainy season and the commencement of winter was allotted to spiritual studies, while the rest of the year was devoted to the study of humanities and of the sciences and arts relating to the future professions.

**Conditions of spiritual insight.**

13. The student's attitude towards the spiritual teacher ought to be different from that towards the purely secular teacher. A thorough attunement of the pupil's mind with that of the teacher is necessary for a proper comprehension of the truths taught by the spiritual teacher. This is secured by a reverent and loving service to the teacher regarded as the embodiment of the Supreme Lord, to whom the pupil ought to look up as the final source of all spiritual inspiration. When the pupil fails to grasp any spiritual truth once taught by the teacher, it is because his mind is not thoroughly attuned to the teacher's mind: he should then seek perfect attunement by further and more devoted service to the teacher, which is only a worship of the Divine Lord in the teacher: **यद्दच्छायामसंवृत्तौ गतिरेव तस्मिन्** (**आप.** 1-14-9). Outside the spiritual studies, there is no necessity for such service: **न बहिर्वेदे गतिर्विद्यते** (**आप.** 1-13-12). We may explain the reason thus: Spiritual truths concern the Spirit or the Self within, the individual Self; or they may concern the Supreme Self (the Divine Lord) who shines through the individual Self. Those truths, when taught by the teacher, are only his mental pictures of some aspects of the Spirit within, which cannot be dissociated from the thinking mind and presented to the mind and the senses, as an external object can be. So that, till the pupil's mind gets perfectly attuned to the teacher's mind, the exact picture of a spiritual aspect formed in the mind of

the teacher cannot be reproduced in the pupil's mind. It is not so in the case of the sciences relating to external objects. The truths of these sciences can be brought home to the pupil's mind by directly placing before the pupil's mind and senses the external objects to which the truths relate. Thus a life of strict brahmacharya is a necessary condition of spiritual insight. The real life of brahmacharya has long gone out of practice among the Hindus, so that, writing about 2000 years ago, one of the sutrakaras (Apastamba) said, "in these modern ages no Rishis are born, for lack of tapas or brahmacharya-niyama in the student-life of the youth." With the decline of spiritual insight, faith in the reality of spiritual life has also declined. If the Hindus would again be a progressive people which they once were, they should revive this spiritual life of brahmacharya, observing the rules thereof from their youth upwards.

**Progress in science and art.**

14. The real life of brahmacharya will not only contribute to a sense of reality of spiritual life among the people, it will also lead to a real progress in science and art. With the mind and the senses purified and refined by the observance of the rules of brahmacharya, the student will obtain a better insight into the subtle nature and composition of the forces and things with which the modern sciences deal. The improvement in the arts of life which may be thereby affected will tend to make life all the richer and more refined. The ancient Hindus evidently recognised this bearing

of brahmacharya on the progress of science and art, as they laid down the rule: **उपनयनं विद्यार्थस्य श्रुतितः संस्कारः.** "He who seeks mastery in science will do well to undergo spiritual regeneration according to the Vedic Law." When the ancient Hindus led a life of brahmacharya in youth they made a very wonderful (for their times) progress in sciences and arts of life, a few of which still survive, while the rest are known to us only in name.

**Brotherhood of people.**

15. I may refer to one far-reaching result of the life of brahmacharya in youth, which is of very great importance to all people living in the modern civilized world. The high ideals of spiritual life, instilled early into the mind of every pupil, and even followed in practice by him in the way pointed out above, will permeate in course of time the life of the people as a whole through the cultured classes. This will tend to remove the greed for material possessions, and do away with the hankering after luxuries; and there will be no room for mutual jealousies of any kind. There is no fear that the people will then become lethargic; for one of the primary conditions of spiritual life according to the Vedic Law is strenuous work in the cause of the world-progress, increasing the happiness of humanity and all sentient existence, and thus increasing the glory of the Divine Lord. Service for the glory of the Lord only increases the divine glory inherent in the true Self in man.

**The awakening of the individual.**

16. From this study of the ancient Hindu ideal of education we may derive some valuable lessons for the improvement of the modern system of education. The one striking feature of the ancient system is its primary concern with the true individual and his organs of knowledge. The individual is first awakened and is taught how to gain control over his mind and senses which are to be purified and refined. The awakened soul with his pure and refined mind and senses can better grasp the truths of science and art than the impure and unrefined mind and senses with the light of soul shining but dimly through them. This is a feature of the ancient system which we may very well introduce into the modern system. It will make a radical change in the life of man, by awakening and improving the individual himself. Knowledge is wanted not for its own sake, but for the individual. When the true individual is aroused and given proper instruments, he can very easily acquire much of the knowledge which nowadays we take so much trouble to force into the young pupil's mind. In fact the awakened soul endued with strong and refined instruments can achieve much more than now in all realms of thought and action. The modern system tries to evoke the powers of the mind and the senses as they are, without any direct attempt to purify and refine them.

**Religious education of the student.**

17. The ancient system shews wherein true religious education consists, and what is its place and use in the education of the youth. True religious

education does not consist in teaching theology and religious dogmas, or even the mere philosophy and metaphysics of religion. On the contrary he should be taught the broad fundamental truth of religion that the true man is not the bodily organism we call man; that the real self is the Spirit in the body, one with Brahman, the Supreme Self. He should be taught to realise this truth by exercising his individual will and controlling the mind and the senses. To this end he shall consciously lead a life of active unselfish strenuous work in devotion to a higher being and in the service of his spiritual teacher,—a life free from all sensual indulgences and all stimulant foods which excite passions. He will in due course be taught the fundamental laws of spiritual evolution, and the path of spiritual progress. He will be told how he can gradually develop the mighty spiritual potentialities abiding in his own divine Self by always using the powers he already has for the glory of the Divine Lord, *i.e.*, for the happiness of the whole world. He will be shewn how the opportunities of his everyday social life may be used for his spiritual progress. All religious instruction thus relates to practical life. When subject to the strict regimen of food and denied all forms of sensual indulgence, as the rules of brahmacharya demand, the young students of both sexes may be saved from those sexual lapses which are often brought forward as an excuse for the early marriage of boys and girls, which has been working so much havoc in the Indian society.

**The student-life of girls.**

18. In the ancient Hindu system, girls were admitted to the student-life in the same way as the boys, and subject to the same rules. This is a point which the modern orthodox Hindus should take to heart. In one of the ancient works on our sacred laws, rules relating to the student-life of girls are laid down : while in a comparatively recent work of the same kind we are told that, in times of yore, girls led student-life in the same way as boys. Why, then, has the practice changed so materially ? Some economical changes have since taken place, due chiefly to the increased rigidity of the caste system, which prevented the employment of the people of the labouring classes as domestic servants in the households of the cultured classes. The woman of the cultured classes has in consequence been consigned to domestic drudgery, which increased with an increasing sense of ease and comfort and a craving for luxuries and sensual indulgences ; and it has been thought that for such a work in life no spiritual, literary or technical training of a systematic character is necessary. This has led to the early marriage of girls. At an age when the boy is sent to school, the girl is married and sent to the husband's family to learn household work under the tender care of the mother-in-law ; or after marriage she remains with the parents learning household work, and joins the husband's family as soon as she is regarded physiologically capable of bearing children. But there is no longer any necessity for continuing this system.

By "simple living and high thinking," by the use of machinery and employment of the laboring classes of cleanly habits for domestic service, the upper classes can be released from such a wholesale domestic drudgery; and then there can no longer be any meaning in denying to them the benefits of a liberal education. By educating boys and girls under the wholesome regimen of brahmacharya we may put off with impunity their marriage till they have completed their education and attained full bodily development.

**Uniform religious instruction for all Hindu students.**

19. The sketch given above of the ancient Hindu ideal of education helps the solution of some of the perplexing social problems connected with the caste system, notably the problem of religious education of students in our schools. Acccording to the ancient system the Vedic culture is open to all aspirants of spiritual life, to whatever caste or class or sex they may belong. The only distinction made in the ancient times was between a brahmana and a non-brahmana, but not in the same sense of the word as it now has, nor for the purpose of excluding the non-brahmana from the Vedic culture. A brahmana youth was one who was born in a family which had all along been leading a spiritual life and who was therefore brought up in a pure physical, moral and spiritual atmosphere. A brahmana youth was therefore one who was distinguished by purity of life, exhibiting signs of a pure body and mind; and the Vedic culture was open only to a youth of pure body and

mind. Other youths were those born in families which had long before fallen from brahmanical status by neglect of spiritual life, and who were later on classed as Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras, and so on. In the case of these youths the teacher's first care was to purify their body and mind, and he admitted them to the Vedic culture after a year's life of brahmacharya or even less according to the impurity of the body and the mind to be purged away. On the contrary, the brahmana youth was admitted to the Vedic culture as soon as he presented himself, simply because presumably he possessed a pure body and mind. It was held that a year's life of brahmacharya could purify any youth in body and mind; and the teacher must have had his own tests to ascertain the purity. A more stringent and longer process of purification was demanded in later times to which Apastamba belonged. The latest regulations deny the Vedic culture altogether to the Shudras, while the modern custom has excluded even the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas from that culture. The exclusion, it may be observed, has become absolute when the reality of the spiritual life constituting brahmacharya has altogether disappeared and ceremonialism has taken its place. In the ancient times when the spiritual life was real, the sins of the delinquent parents were not visited upon the sons; and the exclusion of the delinquents themselves from spiritual culture was not absolute. On this question my orthodox brahmana brethren may find it hard to agree with me, out of their great regard and

reverence for the long tradition and custom imposing religious disabilities upon the non-brahmana castes. But the original Vedic teaching which aims at realities does not uphold such invidious distinctions in this most important concern of a man's life, and the teaching will certainly appeal to all who have learned to view the question without prejudice. In pursuance of this teaching, boys and girls of all classes and denominations may be taught and brought up quite alike in religious matters.

**United India and humanity.**

20. This ancient Hindu system of education shows to us the lines of practical spiritual life along which our students should be brought up. I can conceive no objection on the part of the leaders of any religious denomination to the Indian students of all religious denominations being subjected to the same regimen of life as the ancient brahmacharya system demands. Such a step will promote a spirit of religious fraternity and equality among the Idian students which will be carried on into the later life of manhood. This is therefore a question of vital importance to those who would build up an Indian nation, and I would therefore invite the earnest attention and consideration of educationists in all parts of India to this side of the education of the youth. Unity in spiritual life, especially in the physical conditions connected with it in early life, will best promote unity and fraternity throughout life where now religions divide the people into hostile camps. I even hope that it will lead eventually to the unity of all the civilized peoples in the East and the West.

# Editorial Notes from 'Dharma-Prachar'

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## I. A Brahmin Post-puberty Marriage.

(*July* 1914.)

1. Mr. J. Srinivasa Rao of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, writes in the *Divyajnana-Dipika* (the Telugu Theosophical monthly, as follows:—

"Early this month, Mr. K. Srinivasa Rao, the renowned Telugu poet and brother of the well-known Mr. Kolachalam Venkatrao (quondam member of the Madras Legislative Council) of Bellary, celebrated the marriage of his grown up daughter, who attained puberty over two years ago, in strict accordance with the procedure laid down in the shastras with the aid of Vaidika priests, the bridegroom being Mr. Visvanatha Rao of Berhampore, a barrister-at-law. The father of the girl is convinced that child-marriages are wrong in principle and are opposed to the shastras; and he has long made up his mind to act up to his conviction, whatever difficulties he may have to meet in this righteous course. His firm will has so far found no obstacle in the way.

"All the lay gentlemen of the city and a large number of Vaidika priests honoured the occasion, blessed the couple, and partook of the customary presents of fruits and *pan supari*. There was no one present but spoke of this departure from the customary groove with sincere approbation, and no sign of disapprobation was visible anywhere among

them. The brothers were held up as heroes on this account.

"Many gentlemen attended the marriage dinners and none of them have been subjected to any kind of criticism from any quarter. All people must feel grateful to the gentlemen concerned for thus paving the way and helping forward the cause of righteousness. No righteous resolve, however improper it may seem to many at the time as relating to a matter which has long been out of practice, will never fail of its fulfilment if only pursued with courage and perseverance. God will never fail to help the cause of righteousness, and the Maharshis, too, will render the needed help. Let us, therefore, follow this true shastric system of adult-marriage and help to restore our Motherland of India to her ancient glory."

2. We have known and heard of several cases of post-puberty marriages of Brahmin girls, in this and in other parts of India; but the case quoted above seems to be one of the very few recent occurrences wherein the parties to the marriage have made no secret of the real condition of the bride at the time of marriage. It must be remembered that in this particular case the father of the bride is a gentleman of culture and social influence and cherishes advanced views in all social matters, and that in his family more than one member have crossed the seas and travelled in what in the orthodox view are forbidden lands. No wonder that he has planned a genuine post-puberty marriage in his family and has been able to carry out

his plan without any let or hindrance. The bride-groom, too, is a barrister-at-law, having resided in the British Isles for many months, and entertains progressive ideas on social questions, and has therefore taken kindly to this desirable step on the path of social reform. No doubt, science and common-sense point to the desirability of this measure of reform.

3. But the common run of the Hindus regard the question from a different point of view. They view marriage as a sacrament, as a holy act whose real meaning and purpose are beyond the ken of material and moral science. They regard it as a subject of injunction, of spiritual law or Dharma strictly so called, which should be learnt from the Shastra, from the Veda itself which deals with super-physical and purely spiritual matters.

4. The question arises, is the Vedic Law opposed in this matter to the dictates of common sense, reason and science? Certainly not. The Vedic Law enjoins marriage between an adult man and an adult woman. The marriage vows uttered at the time of marriage in the form of *mantras* can have no meaning if either party happens to be a mere child or is ignorant of the nature of the duties and responsibilities of the married life which commences from the very moment of the utterance of these vows. It is this pledge that constitutes marriage a *samskara* or *sacrament*, a holy act, and differentiates the married life from the exercise of the mere animal reproductive function.

5. According to the Vedic ideal, the married

life of a sacramental character consists in serving Devas, Rishis, and Pitris, by self-sacrifice and beneficent service to the whole sentient existence, by taking pupils and teaching them the spiritual law, and by raising a noble progeny and bringing them up properly. Is it likely that these ideas which compose the vows of marriage and make marriage a sacrament can ever enter the heads of the child-wife and the child-husband of the modern day, or of even a man and a woman who have grown up without a proper previous training and culture, who have not been previously taught the Vedic ideals of married life, who have not been fully trained for the discharge of the duties and responsibilities of the life of holy wedlock ?

6. There was a time when boys and girls of all classes of Indo-Aryans were alike taken in hand and duly trained for the holy householder-life. They were betimes taught the Vedic Law of spiritual evolution and were disciplined in a life of moral and physical purity and spiritual devotion,—in what is known as a life of *brahmacharya*. Only after the student attained fixity in this life was he given the necessary training for his future professional career. No wonder then that the Aryans so trained and brought up were a virile people who dared and achieved so much in many spheres of life that the remnants of their achievements are still a wonder to the modern savants.

7. Thus India's uplift depends on the early training of her boys and girls. We have not only to educate their intellects but also to regulate their

physical life, their moral conduct, and their spiritual culture. The regulated school-life nowadays mainly comprehends their intellectual and moral culture and forms only one-third of their waking life. Much care and attention has to be bestowed on the remaining two-thirds also. How to regulate this is a problem which it may be hard to solve; but solve it we must. May we not adapt the principles of brahmacharya or ancient student-life to the modern conditions of the student-life of boys and girls ?

### II. Marriage Reform and its method.

*(December 1914)*

1. We are very pleased to record that a bill for declaring the validity of marriages of Hindu women after puberty has been introduced into the Madras Legislative Council by the Hon'ble Mr. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri. The text of this bill with the statement of objects and reasons is reproduced in the pages of this issue of our Magazine. While many jurists, lawyers and judges of eminence entertain no doubts as to the validity of such marriages, there are some lawyers and judges of equal eminence who have doubts as to the validity of such marriages among the brahmanas and some other communities such as the Vaishyas who follow the brahmana communities in regard to the marriageable age of girls. These latter would have set at rest their doubts as to the validity of post-puberty marriages of Hindu women belonging to these communities by a special legal enactment. Such an enactment will no doubt be welcome to

those who, though aware of the evils of the ante-puberty marriages such as are in vogue among the brahmanas, and though convinced that post-puberty marriages are more in consonance with the Vedic Law of marriage, are still deterred from following the wholesome Vedic Law by their doubts as to whether post-puberty marriages will be held valid in a court of law.

2. We cannot ignore the fact that notwithstanding ancient custom, science, reason and common sense, all pointing to the contrary, post-puberty marriages are regarded by a large section of the orthodox community as unshastric, so far as brahmanas and vaishyas are concerned; so that, while the enactment declaring the validity of post-puberty marriages may help to remove one stumbling block in the way of reform in the forward section of the community, the mass of the brahmana and vaishya communities following the lead of the orthodox will remain as unmoved as ever before. We have mainly to trust for any results in the cause of reform to the slow process of education and general culture. The approval and the example of the leaders of society will certainly go a great way towards effecting the desired change in the attitude of the masses towards reform. The discussion on the introduction of the bill in the Madras Legislative Council has shewn that there is an agreement among the accredited leaders of the community that this measure of reform is quite desirable. It is the duty of the larger section of the leaders of the community scattered throughout

the country to create a public opinion in favour of the measure and to educate the people concerned to appreciate all the other measures of social reform that may lead up to and follow this one.

3. The question of marriage reform has to be presented to the public from two standpoints of view ; (1) one comprising the scientific, economic, social and moral points of view, and (2) the other being the shastric point of view. The people must be made to clearly understand how early marriages, such as are in vogue among the brahmanas and those other classes who follow the brahmanas in this respect, drain the vitality, and stunt the physical growth, of the boys and girls and of their off-spring, how very often poor boys and girls are burdened very early in life with children whom they can ill afford to maintain and bring up properly and are driven by necessity to adopt a very low standard of living, how a community made up in the main of such people cannot cope with their virile neighbours in the battles of life, how early marriages interfere with the even course of boys' education and put a stop to the girls' education at its very early stages, how they affect the moral character of boys and girls making them contract sensuous habits too early in life, how men, burdened with cares of families, become unfit for large undertakings and enterprises of any kind ; how, in fine, early marriages lead to precocity and early decay. With the sensible portion of our community these considerations will carry much weight ; and when the people at large are made to see these evils,

they will be prepared to adopt the measures of marriage reform so much needed, if only the bug-bear of the shastric prohibition is unmasked. We are aware of the many advantages claimed for the existing system ; but most of them, on examination, will be found to be only seeming, not real, advantages, in their naked form ; while the few that are real should be sacrificed in view of the larger interests at stake.

4. Many already see the evils of our custom of early marriages, but they are only deterred from giving it up by the compelling force of the long custom and in view of the few advantages it has. At the back of all this is the idea that the Shastra enjoins early marriages and that this injunction is an inviolable law. It is the removal of this idea that our study and teaching of the Shastra on this question should aim at. We put our faith in the Shastra in the belief that it embodies higher wisdom than ordinary men possess. Should we not then reflect for a while how the Shastra, which we look up to as the embodiment of wisdom, can fall short of the wisdom of the ordinary intelligent man ; how Shastra can enjoin early marriages, such as are practised by the brahmanas, which are the source of so many real evils and of only very few, if any, real advantages ?

5. Let us see what the Shastra says on the marriageable age of boys and girls. It is the Manu-Smriti and other works of the class which guide our social and socio-religious institutions. According to these works a man after finishing his

student-life shall marry a girl between 8 and 12 years of age, or one who may be younger still. It is the duty of the parents or other guardians of girls to give them away in marriage before they attain the age of puberty to worthy husbands. But when a girl is not so given away in marriage till three years have passed after she has attained maturity, she shall marry a husband of her own choice: she shall not remain unmarried long after that age. This is the comprehensive regulation regarding the marriageable age of boys and girls laid down in the works called Smritis, the institutes now guiding the socio-religious institutions of the Hindus. All of them recommend the early marriage of girls, and some condemn in severe terms the marriage of girls after puberty, while one or two go so far even as to insist that the girl who remains unmarried when she attains the age of puberty should be left alone in a wild forest to become a prey to any carnivorous beast. These works on law have greatest weight with the orthodox Hindus, especially with the learned orthodox pandits or indigenous scholars, who look upon them as the Shastras of inviolable authority.

6. A little examination will show that the Smritis cannot be credited with such inviolable authority. Every student of our sacred laws is aware that the law of *Smriti* is distinguished from the law of *Shruti*, and that the latter has a higher authority than the former. What every student may not know, or, even if he knows, may not always bear in mind is the reason why it is so.

*Shruti* deals with facts, truths and laws which we can know only by hearing from others, *i.e.*, through *revelation*; it does not deal with truths and laws which man can find out for himself. *Smriti*, on the other hand, deals with facts, truths, and laws which man can know for himself; it sometimes deals with facts and truths which, though originally obtained by revelation, have passed through the mind of man and have been subjected to the limitation of his intellectual vision, his moral power and his spiritual insight. The former lays down laws which are based on Divine Wisdom coming through Devas or superhuman men called Rishis; the latter lays down rules and regulations devised by man and based on his personal comprehension of laws of nature ascertained directly by himself or learned by him indirectly from others who have a direct knowledge of them. Thus we see the reason why Shruti is of a higher authority than Smriti in matters concerning Dharma, the path of higher progress. The authority of the Smritis varies with the intellectual, moral and spiritual eminence of their respective authors. Among the works called Smritis come the different systems of philosophy, different arts and sciences; and the Smritis such as the Manu-Smriti are only a particular class of the works so called in which our social and socio-religious rules and regulations called *Samaya-acharas* are rccorded. *Samaya* means *samketa*, convention, and *achara* means rule or custom. So the Smritis of the class to which Manu-Smriti belongs deal with rules and customs based

on mere social convention bearing the stamp of human culture, as distinguished from the *Veda* or Shruti, which is a direct revelation through super-human agency. Our Shastras distinguish between Dharmajna-*Samaya*, the convention based on a knowledge of the revealed law, and that based on man's personal comprehension of the world around him, and hold that the former alone should have any claim to the title of Dharma : they derive their authority from the primary Dharma or the laws of Shruti on which they are based. We have both kinds of conventional rules recorded in our Smritis or embodied in our unwritten customs (*acharas*) ; we have also both wholesome and unwholesome *samaya-acharas* in our laws and customs, written and unwriten ; and writers such as Apastamba have mentioned many *acharas* which, they say, are opposed to *shastras*, to the genuine *acharas*, to those based on original revelation, to Dharma proper. When the regulations of the different Smritis on any point conflict with each other, as in the case of the marriageable age of girls, we have to see which one of them is in accordance with Shruti or Dharma proper. Now, Harita and Yama among the authors of Smritis are often quoted to the effect that at one time girls led a student-life of the same kind as that of boys and that they were married only after puberty. This former custom conflicts with the regulations of the modern smritis enjoining marriage of girls before puberty and condemning marriages after puberty. Which of these is in accord with the teaching of the Shruti? In the

case of marriage the teaching of the Shruti has to be ascertained from the Vedic Mantras uttered in connection with the several stages of the marriage ceremony. The Mantras connected with the very first stages of the ceremony show that at the time of marriage the bride is expected to understand the duties and responsibilities of married life, to be able to direct the temporal and spiritual concerns of the family life, and to enter at once on the duties of married life in all its aspects. It is therefore clear that the ancient system of fully educating the girl under the regimen of brahmacharya and marrying her after puberty is the one which accords with the Shruti. It follows then that our present system should be reformed on the lines of the ancient custom if we would follow the teaching of the highest Shastra in such an important concern of life.

7. Even the marriage ritual which we are bound to observe, as laid down in the manuals called *Grihya-Sutras*, points to the ancient rule of adult marriage. The marriage ceremony as observed now consists of four parts: (1) *Kanyavarana*, securing the consent of the parents of the girl; (2) *Panigrahana*, or seizing the hand, marriage proper; (3) the married couple going to their new home; (4) three days' life of spiritual devotion and celibacy preparatory to their cohabitation on the fourth day (*samavesana*, *garbhadhana*). These form the integral parts even of the present day marriage ceremony of the brahmanas, so that, properly speaking, even now the bride ought to be an adult woman at the time of marriage.

8. We believe that a knowledge of the Vedic law of marriage and the Vedic ideals of married life will be an effective preparation for marriage reform, and we hope that our social leaders will try and spread that knowledge.

### III. Orthodoxy and Marriage Reform.

*(April 1915.)*

(A discussion between His Holiness the Uttaradi Swami Sri Madhvacharya and PANDIT A. MAHADEVA SASTRI.)

**Occasion for discussion.**

We are glad to record here a terse account of a long and interesting discussion on the question of Social Reform which took place on Sunday the 28th last (March 1915) between His Holiness the Uttaradi Swami and Mr. A. Mahadeva Sastri. The Swami is the spiritual head of a very important section of the followers of the Dualistic School of Vedanta founded by Sri Madhvacharya. The present head of the Uttaradi Mutt is highly learned in Tarka and Vedanta and is held in great esteem by a large number of his priestly and lay disciples. Unlike the Swamis of his rank His Holiness is eager to know the methods of Social Reform on Shastric lines such as the one adopted by Mr. Mahadeva Sastri and is even prepared to discuss the question in person, of course feeling confident that the success will always lie with him at every step. Mr. Sastri, wise with his seven year's experience of private and public discussions with pandits, is now quite averse to engaging in any personal discussions in public with those who honestly and

firmly hold that the existing social regulations are too sacred to be investigated by ordinary men who should only honour them by implicit compliance, as they are supposed to have been laid down in their present form by omniscient mighty sages of old. In spite, however, of his misgiving as to the apparent results of a discussion to be carried on with the Swami in the midst of his admirers and devoted disciples, Mr. Sastri, in his third visit to the Swami, made, at the Swami's urgent and repeated entreaties, an attempt to indicate his main line of investigation in determining what the original basic truths underlying our several social institutions are and where they stand in need of reform.

**Practice at variance with Smritis.**

Mr. Sastri began by pointing out the divergence that there is between some of the approved current practices of the Hindus of the present day and the written regulations of the Dharma-Sastras, comprehensively known as Varnashrama-Dharma. In some cases, the current practices involve open violations of the rules of Smritis and border on criminal breaches of very wholesome statutory regulations—such as the rules of student-life, avoidance of consanguinous marriages, *etc.* In a few cases, however,—such as education of women and Shudras, vegetarianism among Brahmanas, freedom in the choice of professions—the existing practices mark a decided improvement on the written regulations. Does not this, asked Mr. Sastri, make all thinking men among us reflect

whether it is not desirable to change our existing regulations wherever necessary and frame a new body of regulations which, while consonant with the fundamental laws of Dharma or Religion proper and sometimes urgently demanded by them, will bring our social institutions into line with the modern requirements of the Hindus as a community having to rub shoulders with other advancing communities, and having also to make headway along their own lines of spiritual progress. That such changes have been made in our socio-religious regulations from time to time is borne out by the statement of the Smritis themselves that different regulations (Smritis) are intended for different Yugas or ages, and by the fact that different Vedic communities scattered in different parts of the country have had each its own set of regulations differing form those of the rest in some important respects.

**Scope for Social Reform.**

The Swami interposing said :--Where our practices differ from the written regulations of the Smritis, we should fall back upon those regulations as they now are. We have no right to introduce any changes in those regulations. The different Smritis intended for different Yugas were all written by mighty Rishis who, in their unerring omniscien wisdom, saw what was good for each age and fo each community.

Mr. Sastri, demurring to this, said :—The vie that the regulations of the Smritis were all la down by the mighty omniscient sages of old is only

based on recent works of dogmatic, sentimental and legend-loving writers. On the contrary, according to the treatises left by more matter-of-fact and practical compilers of Law such as Apastamba, the regulations of Varnashrama-Dharma are characterised as *Samayacharika - Dharmas*,—rules of life (Dharma) relating to practices (Achara) based on social convention (*samaya*, *samketa*)—as distinguished from the *Shrauta-Karma*, those greater Vedic rites and ceremonies of a purely religious nature which are expressly laid down in the Shruti, and, again, from the *Grihya-Karma* or those lesser ones, the domestic *samskaras* or sacramental rites, which could only be gathered from the observances current at the time of their compilation. Thus the Varnashrama-Dharma which constitutes the subject-matter of the Smritis are made up of regulations based upon social convention. It is said that the authority of such social conventions vests in *Dharmajnas*, those who know Dharma proper, the Vedic Laws of the two classes mentioned above. Thus the authority for making social rules vests in those men in society who can make out the law laid down in the Veda. As to who can make out the Vedic Law, Manu says,

आर्षं धर्मोपदेशं च वेदशास्त्राविरोधिना ।
यस्तर्केणानुसंधत्ते स धर्मं वेद नेतरः ॥

"Whoso reflects upon the teachings of the Rishis and of Dharma by reason not conflicting with Vedic Texts, he alone knows Dharma and no other."

If our community has not altogether degenerated, there must be men in it who are competent

to understand the Vedic Law and to make new social rules and alter the existing ones. The social rules when framed by people who know from the scripture the Vedic Law relating to spiritual concerns and who are competent to judge of the social concerns to which these rules relate, are quite authoritative in their sphere, as the Vedas are authoritative in their own sphere, *viz.*, Dharma or religion proper. So Apastamba says:

**धर्मज्ञसमयः प्रमाणं वेदाश्च ॥**

"The social conventions of those who know Dharma are authoritative as well as the Vedas are (with regard to Dharma proper)."

Rules of social convention framed by men become authoritative only when they are based on Dharma, when they do not conflict with the Vedic Laws relating to spiritual progress, which man should not override by his intellect and reason, as they transcend his experience and relate to the permanent interests of the soul and the spirit.

Here the Swami interposed:—*Samaya* does not mean *Samketa* or convention only. According to *Amara*, it means *Siddhanta* also.

Mr. Sastri replied:—*Samketa* and *Siddhanta* mean one and the same thing. Both mean **पौरुषेयी व्यवस्था** the rules framed by men and the conclusions arrived at by men, as distinguished from the laws and truths taught in the Vedas and the sayings of Rishis which are impersonal and untainted by human bias, and which therefore compel man's implicit compliance.

**Temporal and Spiritual aspects of Marriage.**

Then Mr. Sastri went on thus:—In all our socio-religious institutions comprehended under *Varnashrama-Dharma* there is a secular or temporal aspect amenable to human comprehension and judgment and a religious or spiritual aspect transcending ordinary human experience and only amenable to Vedic Law. By way of illustration we may take the socio-religious institution of marriage. Two aspects of marriage may be distinguished, temporal and religious. The temporal aspect is determined by natural sexual attraction and the social need of protection the weaker sex feels. The religious aspect of marriage consists in man and woman, thus brought together by the call of temporal interests, making up their mind, under the influence of the Vedic Law, to live as husband and wife a life of mutual love, help and co-operation in all concerns of life, in the matter of food, health, wealth and progeny, cherishing spiritual aspirations and using in their joint life all their vital energies and talents and capacities so as to conduce to the advancement of their permanent spiritual interests.

For man such a socio-religious institution as marriage is necessary because sexual life which remains normal when guided by pure animal instinct becomes abnormal in the imaginative animal, man, and would degenerate into a morbid sensualism, if not brought under the directive control of high moral and spiritual aspirations and resolutions. It is this high moral and spiritual resolve that makes marriage

and the whole married life a *samskara* or sacrament and a holy life of sacrament. The offspring of such a union of man and woman in holy wedlock will be of a very fine type. It is, therefore, no wonder that by raising and bringing up such a progeny the man and the woman discharge, as declared in the Veda, the debt they owe to the *Pitris*, to the great personages such as Marichi who originally gave birth to our race and whose chief function in the world is to advance human evolution by producing and preserving higher types of humanity.

**Vedic Law of Marriage.**

Mr. Sastri then proceeded to show how the Vedic ideals of marriage and married life as voiced forth in the *Mantras* of marriage constitute the basis of the Vedic Law; and, he said, the Vedic injunction thus made out may be formulated thus: when a man and a woman have been drawn together by sexual attraction and other needs of a social and temporal life, they shall lead a life of perfect union and mutual help and co-operation in all concerns of life, temporal and spiritual, using their powers and capacities for the progress of their community and the whole sentient existence around them; and so long as they are inclined for a sexual life they shall lead a life of continence and chastity, thereby raising and bringing up a worthy virile offspring, who will be in a position to help forward the cause of human progress in all departments of life. Thus, as shown by the Vedic *Mantras* uttered by the bridegroom and the bride at the time of marriage voicing forth their ideals

of marriage and married life as well as their pledges and vows of mutual fidelity, love and co-operation, the Vedic Law expects the bridegroom and the bride to be at the time of marriage a man and a woman who are fully alive to the responsibilities of married life, able to discharge them from the very day of marriage onward. This constitutes the *Vivaha-Dharma*, the spiritual side of marriage and married life; and it is this which constitutes the proper province of the Shastra, the sphere in which our empirical reason should bow to *revelation* as relating to the operations of law which transcend the ordinary human experience. So, according to the highest authority on the matter, *Vivaha-Dharma*, or marriage and married life in its spiritual aspect as laid down in the Vedic Law, is applicable only to a grown-up man and a grown-up woman, both being mature in body and in thought, both having wills of their own, both able to guide themselves in all concerns of life, and both cherishing high spiritual aspirations.

**Marriage and Social Legislation.**

The temporal aspect of marriage and married life,—Mr. Sastri said,—falls within the province of social convention wherein the community is left free to frame its own regulations of marriage and married life according to their own ideas of social efficiency and moral propriety, and of consistency with the Vedic Law. This freedom has always been exercised by the Hindus from time immemorial as shown by the different codes of regulations (smritis) that have been in vogue at different periods

of our history, prescribing at different periods different ages of marriage for girls and boys and thus reflecting the different environments and cultures of the communities that severally framed those regulations.

**Vedic Mantras inapplicable to early marriages.**

The Swami then rejoined :—The ideals of marriage and married life as voiced forth in the Vedic *Mantras* can be cherished even by immature girls even at the early ages at which they are now married according to the regulations of the Smritis. Have we not seen,—the Swami asked,—children of four and five years of age playing at marriage and married life? How can it be said that the Vedic Law of marriage applies only to an adult woman?

Mr. Sastri said in reply :—Children's ideas of marriage and married life relate to mere externals, the *tamashas* and other striking outward formalities, connected with marriage and married life. They can have no idea of the inner significance of the material factors of marriage or married life as set forth above. The words which the bridegroom and the bride exchange at the concluding part of the ceremony on the fourth night and the acts which are to accompany them show that the bridegroom and the bride are morally and physically fit for immediate sexual cohabitation,—an act in which no child wife and husband of the present day brahmanical marriages can engage without bringing themselves and their guardians and others concerned within the clutches of the criminal law of the land, not to speak of the unhealthy and immoral nature of the act itself.

The Swami then suggested:—The marriage mantras quoted above may refer to acts which will take place in the fulness of time in the future married life of the boy and the girl, though they may be immature at the time of marriage.

At the suggestion of some pandits that then gathered around him, the Swami further argued:—If we try thus to make out the Vedic Law from the *mantras* of the marriage ceremony, we will be led to absurd conclusions. There is, for instance, one marriage *mantra* in which the bridegroom declares that Agni has given him wealth and *progeny* as well as the bride. There is another in which the bride prays to several gods to guard the several parts of her body, to guard her baby when in arms, when walking about naked and in all after-stages. If the *mantras* be significant of the condition of the bride at the time of marriage as Mr. Sastri says, then the bride is to have at the time of marriage a baby in arms,—which is absurd.

To this Mr. Sastri was not without an answer. But, as a direct answer would lead to issues which would elude the grasp of the amateur students of the subject that assembled there and to solutions which would unruffle the minds of the Swami and of his mentors, Mr. Sastri desisted from a direct answer to the objection and proceeded to lead the discussion to the next strong point in the line leading to his main conclusion, a point which, when put, could not fail to strike the mind of even the most amateaurish student. But the line of

explanation of the point just raised by the Swami may be briefly indicated here.

In the first place, the point as put by the opponent is the one which he will find it equally difficult to explain. His answer is that all such mantras, including those which clearly point to the adult age of the bride, refer to acts and events that are to take place in future in the fulness of time, and do not point to the condition of the couple at the time of marriage. This is untenable because the Vedic mantras, wherever they occur, should be explained in their natural sense, that is to say, independently of all reference to man-made rules and regulations, especially when, as in the case of marriage, those regulations are in mutual conflict,—the girls' marriageable age fixed by the different codes varying from full adult age down to early childhood. Another equally untenable explanation of the difficulty resorted to by the advocates of early marriage is that the marriage *mantras* are not significant and cannot therefore be taken as indicative of the conditions of the bridegroom and the bride at the time of marriage. This explanation ought to be the last refuge of even the modern exegetists, who may resort to it only when the mantra concerned is so obscurely worded as to defy all attempts at explanation or when it conveys a meaning which is quite inapplicable to the act which accompanies the utterance of the mantra.

Now, Mr. Sastri has his own explanation of the difficulties pointed out above. The wealth and progeny declared by the bridegroom to have been

given to him along with the bride by Agni, the invisible Devata or Intelligence controlling the vital energy in man and woman, consist of mere powers and capacities in the region of vital forces by which material wealth are acquired and physical progeny brought forth,—not of any tangible wealth and progeny which can be seen and touched by human eyes and hands. Agni is the Intelligence ruling the adolescent age of man and woman and guiding the development of the powers and capacities of producing wealth and progeny. And these powers and capacities thus opened up under the influence of Agni will be brought to material fruition when man and woman have been married and have been leading a married life. So in declaring that Agni has given him wealth and progeny along with the bride, the bridegroom means to say that she as well as himself are quite competent to bring forth progeny and to gather spiritual and material wealth; that she like himself is mature, physically, morally and spiritually. The explanations which some Smritikaras and commentators have put upon the influence said to be exercised by Soma, Gandharva and Agni on women are of the same tenor.

As to the prayers calling on the gods to guard the bride's person and the baby in arms, they manifestly refer to the future. A close study of the section in which this prayer occurs will show that this prayer is one in a series of prayers in which the first few are addressed, by way of thanksgiving, to the several gods who were concerned in

the bride's growth and development in her pre-marital life. Then come another set of prayers addressed to the gods who will be concerned with her well-being in the several stages of her whole married life. In these the bridegroom prays to gods to avert all evils and afflictions in the bride's future married life arising from calamities befalling herself, her husband, and the children of her family. It is in this connection that the baby in arm is mentioned. These prayers, again, are followed by others which occur in connection with all Vedic ceremonies, having no special bearing on marriage and married life. Like these the prayer for the protection of the baby in arms has nothing to do with the state of the bride at the time of marriage. Moreover, they occur only in the ceremonials of two or three Vedic communities who have profusely added *mantras* unconnected with marriage to the original stock of mantras having special significance in connection with marriage. They do not indeed occur in the ceremonials of a dozen or more other Vedic communities who have also added superfluous mantras to the original stock in equal profusion.

To avoid straying into the lines of discussion which have no direct bearing on the main point at issue and to take his stand on the sure and firm ground of his own choice, Mr. Sastri turned from this line of explanation and said at the time in reply to the Swamin as follows:—Though there are some mantras—now found in connection with marriage rituals—which manifestly refer only to future

events, the essential mantras of marriage ceremony must be taken as indicative of the bride's state at the time of marriage. These essential mantras contain expressions of eagerness on the part of the bridegroom and the bride for consummation of marriage and should be taken as pointing to immediate fulfilment; and the parties who can give utterance to such mature ideas as are embodied in the marriage-vows and pledges and can understand their full tenor must be fully mature in body and mind and fit for immediate consummation. Except in the case of manifest absurdity or of physical impossibility there is no need to qualify the natural sense of a Vedic passage even by way of bringing it into line with the Smritis. In this particular case we should avoid such an attempt because the old and new Smritis are in mutual conflict as regards the marriageable age of women.

**Adult and early marriages in the Smritis.**

In explanation of this last statement and by way of leading to his next point Mr. Sastri said: The extant Smritis give us to understand that at one period of our history girls as well as boys had to lead a life of brahmacharya or Vedic student-life, that they were taught Vedas and sciences, that they were married after puberty on the completion of their study, and that they were in some cases even allowed to remain life-long celibate Vedic students and teachers, Brahmavadinis. According to the regulations of the Smritis now in force, the brahmin girl is to be married at the age at which

boys are put to school, to do service to the husband and learn household work in his family. When thus the statutory regulations of the marriageable age of girls that have obtained in different periods of our history are found to be in mutual conflict, we must make out the Vedic Law by a natural interpretation of the Mantras; it will not do to give to the Vedic Mantras of marriage a forced meaning to make them accord with the existing regulations regarding the marriageable age of girls.

Mr. Sastri continued:—When we find two mutually contradictory regulations in the Smritis,—one prescribing student-life for girls in their youth and marriage after puberty, and the other denying to them student-life altogether and enjoining early marriage,—we are to follow that regulation which will better fulfil the demands of the Vedic Law as determined by the ideals of marriage and married life voiced forth in the most significant Mantras connected with the main acts of the marriage ceremony. The system of post-puberty marriage such as was in vogue in the hey-day of Indo-Aryan history affords to the girls opportunities for securing a liberal education and a healthy development of body and mind, and for preparing themselves for a due discharge of all the duties of married life as laid down by the Vedic Law. So, in giving up the present system of early marriage and reverting to the older system of post-puberty marriage, we will be better fulfilling the demands of the Vedic Law which is the ultimate

standard and authority for the true orthodox Hindu.

In concluding the discussion Mr. Sastri said that, proceeding on this line, he has been able to determine the original basis of most of our socio-religious institutions and the reforms needed in them.

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**The Sequel to the Discussion.**

The Hindu Marriage Reform League in Mysore has every reason to congratulate itself on the fruitful results of the discussion above referred to, in which Mr. Mahadeva Sastri, the Secretary of the League, was given an opportunity to show how truly orthodox is the movement represented by the League whose chief object is to raise the marriageable age of Hindu girls and to enable them to spend the earliest and best part of their youth in securing, under a sound system of education, a healthy development of body and mind. His Holiness the Uttaradi Swami deserves much credit for his able conduct in the discussion in which the eager partisans of both sides were held in due restraint. If the Swami himself gave way now and then to impatience in the heat of discussion, it was pardonable, he having chosen to play the part of a combatant in the debate. At first Mr. Sastri proposed only to expound in his own way the line of his investigation of the Shastras which led him to the conclusions he has arrived at as to the necessity of reform in our existing socio-religious institutions comprehended under the term *Varnashrama-Dharma*. But, owing to the Swami's

frequent interrogatories, the exposition was soon turned into a debate. The progress of the exposition was accordingly retarded, contrary to Mr. Sastri's expectation, as he had intended to present his subject from all points of view in one hour or so and be done with it. The result was that at the end of two hours and a half it was found that the discussion did not proceed beyond the preliminary points and much remained unsaid. Mr. Sastri could not afford time to continue the discussion and wound up the subject at the point reached in the discussion, as shown above.

Then at the instance, it is said, of some of the orthodox extremists of the city, a pandit of the Uttaradi Mutt, by name Elattur Krishnachar, delivered a series of lectures traversing, among others, some of the points discussed at the debate, and concluding that the post-puberty marriages were unshastric. The debate and the lectures drew large audiences, as sensational discussions generally do, and at the instance of some among them who wanted to hear the other side, the Hindu Marriage Reform League, Mysore, held two meetings in the Rangacharlu Memorial Hall to represent fully the views on the other side. The audiences at these meetings were equally large. Among the speakers at these meetings were Pandit L. Srinivasacharya (Palace Mahavidvan), Dr. S. Venkoba Rao, Mr. V. N. Narasimmiyengar, the veteran advocate of Social Reform, and Mr. M. Venkatakrishnayya. They spoke at great length pointing out that post-puberty marriages were

shastric and wholesome to the Brahmanic community and answering all the objections brought against the system of post-puberty marriages. Pandit L. Srinivasacharya, whose great learning in Dharma-Sastra has been of late so much in evidence in South India, proved by Shastric quotations and proper reasoning that the Vedas enjoin post-puberty marriages primarily. As he interpreted the regulations of the Smritis, the early marriages enjoined in them came into use when, under the puculiar social conditions of recent ages of our history, the brahmanical communities found some practical inconvenience in fulfilling the conditions of the Vedic Law of adult marriage. According to his showing, there is no reason why under the altered conditions of the present day the brahmanical communities who can fulfil the conditions of the Vedic Law of adult marriage should continue to follow the emergency law of early marriage laid down in the Smritis. In all matters of religious significance, he said, the primary Vedic Law should be followed whenever possible, in preference to the secondary regulations of the Smritis.

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**The Sources of Law.**

The early part of the foregoing discussion having turned upon the *sources of law*, it will be instructive to read what the early matter-of-fact practical compilers of sacred laws have to say on the subject. We therefore append here the passages from those writers bearing on the subject with Buhler's English translation.

*Gautama*: I. 1-2.

१. वोदो धर्ममूलं ॥ २. तद्विदां च स्मृतिशीले ॥

1. The Veda is the source of the sacred law,

2. And the tradition and practice of those who know (the Veda).

*Apastamba*: I. 1, 1-2.

१. अथातः सामयाचारिकान् धर्मान् व्याख्यास्यामः ॥

२. धर्मज्ञसमयः प्रमाणं वेदाश्च ॥

1. Now, therefore, we will declare the acts productive of merit which form part of the customs of daily life, as they have been settled by the agreement (of those who know the law.)

2. The authority (for these duties) is the agreement of those who know the law, (and the authorities for the latter are) the Vedas alone.

*Vasishtha*: I. 4-7.

४. श्रुतिस्मृतिविहितो धर्मः ॥

५. तदलाभे शिष्टाचारः प्रमाणम् ॥

६. शिष्टः पुनरकामात्मा ॥

७. अगृह्यमाणकारणो धर्मः ॥

4. The sacred law has been settled by the revealed texts and by the tradition of the sages.

5. On failure of (rules given in) these (two sources) the practice of the Sishtas (has) authority.

6. But he whose heart is free from desire (is called) a Sishta.

7. (Acts sanctioned by) the sacred law (are those) for which no (worldly) cause is perceptible.

*Baudhayana* : I. i. 1-9

१. उपदिष्टो धर्मः प्रतिवेदम् ॥

२. तस्यानुव्याख्यास्यामः ॥

३. स्मार्तो द्वितीयः ॥

५. तृतीयः शिष्टागमः ॥

५. शिष्टाः खलु विगतमत्सरा निरहंकाराः कुम्भीधान्या अलो-
लुपा दम्भदर्पलोभमोहक्रोधविवर्जिताः ॥

६. धर्मेणाधिगतो येषां वेदः सपरिबृंहणः ।
शिष्टास्तदनुमानज्ञाः श्रुतिप्रत्यक्षहेतवः ॥

७. तदभावे दशावरा परिषत् ॥

८. अथाप्युदाहरन्ति—
चातुर्वेद्यं विकल्पी च अङ्गविद्धर्मपाठकः ।
आश्रमस्थास्त्रयो विप्राः पर्षदेषा दशावरा ॥

९. पञ्च वा स्युस्त्रयो वा स्युरेको वा स्यादनिन्दितः ।
प्रतिवक्ता तु धर्मस्य नेतरे तु सहस्रशः ॥

1. The sacred law is taught in each Veda.

2. We will explain (it) in accordance with that.

3. (The sacred law), taught in the Tradition (smriti, stands) second.

4. The practice of sishtas (stands) third.

5. Sishtas, forsooth, (are those) who are free from envy, free from pride, contented with a store of grain sufficient for ten days, free from covetousness, and free from hypocrisy, arrogance, greed, perplexity and anger.

6. "(Those are called) sishtas who, in accordance with the sacred law, have studied the Veda together with its appendages, know how to draw inference from that, and are able to adduce proofs perceptible by the senses from the revealed texts."

7. On failure of them, an assembly consisting at least of ten members (shall decide disputed points of law).

8. Now they quote also the following verses:—

'Four men who each know one of the four Vedas, a Mimamsaka, one who knows the Angas, one who recites (the works on) the sacred law and three Brahmanas belonging to (three different) orders, constitute an assembly consisting at least of ten members.'

9. 'There may be five, or there may be three, or there may be one blameless man who decides (questions regarding) the sacred law. But a thousand fools cannot do it.'

# Aryan Ideals of Marriage.

*(Lecture at the Mysore Book-Club, 1916.)*

**The old origin of our Marriage ideal.**

Our institution of marriage is primarily based on Vedic ideals of life and has developed out of them in the long course of our social evolution. These ideals of life—Dharma as they are comprehensively known—were laid down for the guidance of the early Aryans by Divine Sages, and these were embodied in the laws of spiritual life formulated in the Vedas and in the socio-religious institutions relating to their temporal life. To understand these ideals in their pristine purity and deepest significance, we have to go back to the period long anterior to our immigration to India, the land watered by the seven Sindhus, the Indus and its tributaries. For a full comprehension of the exact significance of the terms in which these ideals are spoken of, we have to go back to the period when the Hindus and the Eranians, worshippers of Agni and Soma, and perhaps also our Aryan brethren of Europe and Western Asia, all lived as one people; that is to say, to the period when our social and religious institutions were in their original plastic condition, full of vitality, when our system of worship was not yet shaped into the elaborate sacrificial rites and ceremonies known as yagas, when *Agni* meant something more than the external blazing fire into which we throw our oblation, when

*Soma* meant something more than the beverage brewed from the creeper plant known by that name, when *Varna* meant spiritual devotion, not colour or caste. It was certainly far anterior to the period when, settled in India, the Indo-Aryans became divided into hereditary castes according to their social occupations. I should take you back to this remote period of antiquity if I would bring home to your minds the true origin of even that degree of sanctity which is still found associated with marriage among the Hindus, especially of the upper castes. It is the Vedic ideals of marriage and married life that are reflected and deflected and even perverted in the socio-religious institutions worked out in our sacred laws such as those laid down in the Manu-Smriti and other writings of the class. No apology is therefore needed on my part for making references in the course of this discourse to remote periods of our history in trying to explain our ideals of marriage.

**Marriage as a sacrament.**

2. Marriage, with us as with several other peoples more or less civilised, is a sacrament,—an institution having a deep spiritual significance, and whose value cannot be judged from its uses and purposes which our external senses alone can give us to understand. The breeding of progeny and mere satisfaction of the natural craving for sexual companionship are not the only aims of married life cherished by cultured peoples all over the world. Among the advanced and cultured races of people, married life is intended to serve other and nobler

purposes than these, however essential and valuable these are in themselves: nay, it serves to ennoble and sanctify even these acts by bringing into operation higher sentiments than mere natural instincts which alone operate in the lower animals and savages. There is one constitutional difference between men and lower animals which renders the restrictions and limitations implied in marriage and married life necessary for a healthy operation of this instinctual process. As memory and imagination grow in man, sex-instinct develops some morbid tendencies and is liable to abuse and excess, leading even to some social disturbances and troubles, and it becomes necessary to place some healthy restrictions on its erratic action. In the lower animals, for the most part, sex-instinct works in a healthy way and according to the needs of the propagation of the species; but even here abuses and excesses are observed only where an animal develops human qualities of memory and imagination. Once in the social history of our race, as our Sacred Tradition says, the sexual relations were free and unrestrained by any laws of marriage; and it was, as says the same Tradition, the abuse of this freedom that led to the institution of marriage. Such restriction, however, does not seem to be the sole or even the main purpose of marriage and married life, as we are given to understand. However important and necessary, it does not go far to make marriage such a holy sacrament as we consider it to be. The Vedic ideals of marriage and married life involve several other purposes,

each equally if not far more important than maintenance of social order and of the physical vigour of the race—which may appear sacred enough to purely secular minds;—and it is those other purposes which to our minds make marriage and married life holy sacraments, as relating to the higher and more spiritual aspects of our whole life-work on earth.

**The high status of woman in marriage.**

3. The spiritual aspect of marriage is well brought out by Gautama's designation of it—in his list of forty Vedic Samskaras or Sacraments—as **सहधर्मचारिणीसंयोगः**, *Saha-dharma - charini - samyoga*, union of a man with a woman who chooses to fulfil Dharma or spiritual purposes of life conjointly with him. This, as we will see, is a very expressive term pregnant with meaning, conveying fully the Vedic ideal of marriage and married life. In the first place, the designation clearly points to the high purpose which woman equally with man has to consciously fulfil in life. In the next place, the term brings out clearly what is still more important, the truth that man and woman should live a married life if they would fully achieve the high purposes of their earth-life in all its aspects. Equally important is the implication that man and woman should come to live together in married life by their own choice between the several ideals of life and by mutual agreement, not thrown together haphazard by the choice of other persons while they themselves have no idea of all that marriage means. It shows further that prior to marriage

woman no less than man should have been well aware of the ideals of married life and have made up her mind to live up to the high ideals of her choice, proposing of her own free will and consent to live with man in bonds of mutual fidelity, harmony and co-operation. It is not indeed possible to exhaustively express the whole significance of this designation of marrige in such short space or time as I can command in this context. The other designations of marriage in common use do not bring out so fully the meaning of the Vedic ideal of marriage. *Vivaha* or *Udvaha*, for instance, means simply the leading away of the bride with her articles of dowry from her parental home to the new home of the married couple. *Parinayana* refers to the ceremonial act of leading the bride round the sacred fire lit at the time of marriage. *Panigrahana* and *Upayama* mark the bridegroom's acceptance of the hand offered by the bride. Such terms as these point to some ceremonial spectacular aspects of marriage and the beginnings of married life; whereas the term *Saha-dharma-charini-samyoga* signifies the high comprehensive purpose of the whole responsible life of man and woman and the preparation that is necessary for it.

**Married life is all-comprehensive.**

4. The designation serves to make clear one distinguishing feature of the Vedic ideal of married life already referred to. It clearly points to the truth that to fully achieve the high purpose of our earth-life man and woman must live together. We are apt to think that the breeding and rearing of

progeny is the only purpose of life for which man and woman should live together, and that they may be left free to live alone as soon as the responsibilities connected with that purpose have been discharged. The purpose of married life according to the Vedic ideal is not limited to the discharge of this function ; on the contrary it extends to the whole life of man and woman on earth. That is to say, as married life is a necessary condition for a due discharge of the responsibilities connected with reproductive function, so also it is a necessary condition, according to the Vedic Law, for the fulfilment of the other equally or even more important functions of man's life on earth. The raising and bringing up of progeny is only one of the four main functions of an Aryan's life on earth as laid down in the Vedic Law. He has besides to educate the youth of the community and train them for their respective careers in life. He has further to understand and gain control over the higher and finer forces of Nature with a view to developing the resources of the land and the community of his birth and raising the standard of all the arts of life which contribute to the general culture, refinement and happiness of the people at large. He has furthermore to look after the purely spiritual concerns of himself and the community,—himself rising, and also trying to lift the community, high above the petty temporal concerns of the material and sensual side of the earth-life, high up to the lofty and limitless levels of spiritual being and existence. Such are the four lines of activity

marked out by Vedic Law for man and woman, neither of whom alone can, according to that law fulfil on these lines his or her life-purposes without the aid of the other. It is clear to us that in the present stage of human evolution,—*i.e.*, as human organism is at present constituted,—the reproductive function cannot be discharged by man or woman alone; and the Vedic Law only recognises the sway of this necessity throughout man's life-work and insists on the co-operation of man and woman in other concerns of life also. In express terms—such as **अर्धबृगलामिव**; **अर्धो वा एष आत्मनः, यः पत्नी**—the Veda impresses the fact that man and woman form two halves of one whole being, each serving a distinct function, but both having to act as efficient factors in co-operation to produce one single result. It is therefore but natural for the Vedic Law to enjoin that married relation should be maintained throughout life, and to insist on a thorough-going co-operation of man and woman in all concerns of life including reproduction. As a close examination of human nature will shew, in each and every part of their constitution man and woman are complimentary to each other. The differences in their nature go to prove that they are intended for conjoint action in the fulfilment of their life-purposes, each supplying what the other lacks. This difference in their constitution and the fact that numerically men and women are equally distributed point to the high wisdom of the Vedic Law which enjoins conjoint action of man and woman in all activities connected with the

reproductive, educative, economic and spiritual spheres of earth-life. Thus we see that the Vedic outlook of married life is broader and deeper than the ordinary man's conception ; and certainly the Vedic Laws of life are based on that deep knowledge of Nature's processes which was possessed by the Divine Sages of old who gave the Dharma—religious and social law—to the early Aryans.

**Dharma in married life.**

5. We should understand yet another aspect of the Vedic ideal of life if we would realise why marriage and married life are quite so sacred and important as the Hindus have always regarded them. In other words we should study marriage and married life in their aspect as Dharma and understand their religious significance. Dharma in its orginal Vedic sense as synonymous with Yajna means the action of Divine Will in Nature, the Eternal Divine Law of Sacrifice governing the evolution of the universe. Man being truly divine in his essential nature, he should follow the divine law of sacrifice in his life if he would realise his inherent blissful nature. That is to say, the main purpose of man's life is a realisation of his oneness with the Divine Lord ; and he is to achieve this by acting as the Divine Lord does, by gradually divesting himself of all limitations which circumscribe his interests and sphere of action, and thereby unfolding his true nature, which is of limitless range like that of the Divine Lord. So man's Dharma or life-work consists in so extending his

range of life that it may ultimately coincide with that of the Divine Lord with whom he is one in nature and in being. The Aryans to whom the Vedic truths and laws have been given are so constituted as to be soon able to perceive the perishability of all things pertaining to the mundane existence and to aspire to attain to the level of the immortal super-mundane spiritual being and life. As seekers of such immortal infinite life,—of unity with Brahman,—the Aryans are known as Brahmanas, devotees of the infinite Spirit, and constitute *Varna*, a community of seekers, men of *Vrata* or spiritual aspiration, such a community being often spoken of as Arya-Varna in the Rig-veda as distinguished from *Dasyus*, the unspiritual barbarians. It was for such a community that Dharma or Vedic Law of life was laid down, chalking out the course of life leading to the realisation of man's inherent unity with the Lord of the Universe. The Vedic Religion is truly the path which leads from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. The first step or entrance on this path is marked by Yaga in the older Vedic scheme of life, and by *Upanayana* and *Marriage* in the later. *Yaga* involves two steps corresponding to Upanayana and marriage. The first consists in recognising the divinity of man's soul within, in awakening it and in getting the bodily organism under the soul's control; while the second consists in realising the unity of the soul within with the Universal Soul in Nature without. The first constitutes

*Agni-adhana* the establishing of the rule of the fiery Spirit—who is the nature of Rudra, Siva—exercising control over organism; and the second constitutes *Soma-Yaga* in which the Spirit within man goes out to realise his unity with Soma, Vishnu, the all-pervading beneficent Lord of the Universe. Upanayana and marriage also represent respectively the two processes of awakening the individual soul or Brahman within man and of realising his unity with the Universal Soul, Brahman without. So *Yagadiksha* or *Upanayana* marks the first step on the path, that of awakening Brahman in man; and hence it is that, in Vedic parlance, *Yaga-diksha* or *Upanayana* makes one a Brahmana, the seeker and devotee of Brahman;—it may be a man or a woman, belonging to any creed, caste, or race. Thus Dharma means establishment of the rule of man's divine soul within and his striving to realise his unity with the Divine Lord. Marriage as Dharma means an intimate association in life of a man and a woman who seek to realise their unity with the Divine Lord of the Universe, and married life means the course of activities in their joint life on earth by which they try to achieve a realisation of that unity.

**Four lines of activity in married life.**

6. The Brahmana,—the man or the woman in whom the divine soul has been awakened and who seeks to realise his or her oneness with Brahman without,—then, has to realise that unity with Brahman in earth-life. To such a soul the Vedic

Law has shewn three lines of activity in earth-life along which the realisation has to be sought, and along which every brahmana must work before transferring his or her life-activities to the purely spiritual concerns of life. One line of activity relates to the education of the youth. The brahman's work in relation to the youth consists in awakening their souls, in helping them to gain control over their bodies, in training their natural faculties, in teaching them the fundamental truths and laws of Dharma, and in giving them the knowledge required for their worldly careers as citizens ;—in short, in preparing the youth of both sexes for their future work as householders. This is, in the language of the Vedic Law, to discharge the debt due to the Rishis, the divine agents entrusted with the care of the spiritual well-being of humanity. The Brahmana owes to them a debt as he has derived ultimately from them all the knowledge of spiritual laws that he possesses, and he has to discharge that debt by helping the Rishis in their line of work, by imparting his spiritual knowledge to the youth of his community. In doing this work, the brahmana really does the work of the Divine Lord Himself, in the spirit of divine love and self-sacrafice, and thereby realises his unity with the Divine Lord. The second line of work is concerned with the raising of progeny under proper conditions and bringing up children as becomes a brahmana parent. This is a debt due to the Pitri-Devas headed by Prajapati and Manu, who have in charge the propagation of the

race and improvement of the organic structure of the human bodies, and from whom primarily the brahmana has derived his fine body. The third line of activity relates to the study and the manipulation of Nature's forces with a view to improving all the resources which contribute to the health, wealth and happiness of the people at large and lead to a healthy growth and development of their organic capacities. To this line of activity belongs the performance of Vedic Yagas, most of which are scientific processes and magic rites by which Nature's finer forces ruled by Devas—or the Shining Ones—are pressed for man's service, with the help of those Devas invoked by Vedic incantations. This is helping in the task of Devas, the divine agents concerned with the growth and development of man's mind and senses. In working along these lines the brahmana works with God and in the spirit of divine love and self-sacrifice, and thereby realises his unity with God. Such are the activities relating to temporal concerns in which the brahmana's immediate duties lie; and until these duties have been duly discharged no man or woman should turn to the fourth line of activities which relate to the purely spiritual spheres of life, quite beyond the earthly concerns. Accordingly Manu says:

ऋणानि त्रीण्यपाकृत्य मनो मोक्षे निवेशयेत् ।
अनपाकृत्य मोक्षं तु सेवमानो व्रजत्यधः ॥

"Having discharged the three debts, let a man turn his thought to liberation; he who without discharging them seeks liberation is sure to go

down" (VI. 35). He who would soar high without discharging these duties to the community is sure to fall. In plainer terms, without realising his unity with God in earth-life it is hopeless to realise unity on higher planes. Thus a life of intense activity directed to the well-being of the community at large is the lot of the Brahmana, is the Dharma of the man or the woman who seeks to realise unity with Brahman. For a fulfilment of this Dharma, man and woman—it would seem according to the Vedic Law—must co-operate in married life. For efficiency in the sphere of education, in the conquest and manipulation of nature's finer forces, and in supermundane spiritual activities, the intimate association of man and woman such as married life implies would seem to be quite as necessary as in the discharge of duties connected with reproductive function. The work to be done in each of the four lines of activity is so great and requires such special training and capacity that it may not be possible for any man or woman to completely discharge in one life the duties connected with all the four departments of life-work. A man or a woman may choose one particular line of work as the dominant concern of his or her married life according to his or her capacity and temperament, and then such a man and such a woman as have chosen the same line of activity will have to marry. There are thus four kinds of marriage and married life named after the dominant line of life-work chosen by the people about to marry. The marriage is named *Arsha* when the

dominant concern of married life is the education of the youth; it is named *Prajapatya* when the breeding and bringing up of a noble progeny is chosen as the dominant line of life-work; it is named *Daiva* when the employing of Nature's forces for the service of man is chosen as the special line of life-work; it is called *Brahma* when the special line of life-work chosen relates to the purely spiritual concerns of the individual and the community altogether unconnected with the mundane affairs of the earth-life. All are lines of activity along which the married couple may seek to realise unity with Brahman, the Divine Lord of the world. No brahmana may be inactive, and in all lines of activity, whether relating to the temporal concerns of the earth-life or to the purely spiritual concerns, it is in married life that we should look for efficiency and fruitfulness. The Vedic Law, it is thus evident, does not restrict married life to the exercise of reproductive function, which, under proper conditions laid down in the Vedic Law, certainly leads to the realisation of man's oneness with the Divine Lord in His creative aspect; it would seem, according to that Law, that in the other lines of activities also such happy blending of the two distinct natures of man and woman as is implied in married life helps the conscious realisation of man's oneness with Brahman in His other aspects also.

**Spiritual perfection through married life.**

7. Married life according to Vedic Law is thus co-extensive with the whole field of man's

responsible action, and it is so all-embracing that the Vedic teachers of old regarded married life as the only normal one for a man or a woman to lead on earth, and condemned the single life, in the case of both man and woman, as abnormal, as prejudicial to the true interests of the individual and the community. The misanthropes who, unmindful of their social obligations, avoided society and lived solitary lives as anchorites and hermits were condemned in severe terms by the Vedic lawgivers of old. Single life in or out of society was to be the lot of those who suffered from incurable organic diseases of body or of mind transmissible from parents to children. The normal life for a man or a woman of a healthy body and mind lay in married state. They alone among the able-bodied and sound-minded who were impatient of the rules and restrictions of married life took to the single lives of recluses and hermits. Among such were often people who by practice of severe austerities of various sorts developed a very strong will-power, and who, in the absence of due moral balance to be gained only in householder-life, exercised that power to the detriment of social order and well-being. In our Itihasas and Puranas we read of persons who by *tapas* gained control over finer forces of nature and terrorised the society by using their power for illegitimate purposes. So, according to Vedic Law, it is in married life that a brahmana should seek true spiritual development in all its aspects; and it is the life of holy wedlock that leads in good time to spiritual perfection.

Vasishtha, Atri, Janaka, Pippalada, Bharadvaja and a host of other sages of whom we read in our sacred books, not to speak of Shri-Rama and Shri-Krishna, are instances of people who attained and maintained spiritual perfection in married life. Why, the very highest Gods, such as Siva, Vishnu, Brahma who are embodiments of absolute spiritual perfection, are conceived as working in the world and carrying on the work of world-progress along with their consorts.

**Vedic ideals how modified.**

8. We shall now examine the modern Hindu institution of marriage in the light of the Vedic ideal of marriage and married life with a view to finding how far it embodies that ideal, where it has suffered from frequent adjustments to the later conditions of the Hindu society, and where re-adjustments are necessary for a better working out of that ideal. Such an examination is quite necessary because we, Hindus profess to follow the Vedic ideals of life,—what we call Dharma. We repeat the Vedic formulas (Mantras) at our ceremonies, and the bride and the bridegroom take pledges and vows of marriage and married life binding themselves to follow the Vedic rules of married life from the very day of marriage onward. If we would keep faith with Vedic Dharma and be true to our solemn pledges and vows, it behoves us to see that the conditions of our married life are in accord with the Vedic ideals and to improve the existing conditions where they do not answer the demands of

Vedic Dharma. The first glance at the modern institution of marriage, even as worked out in the Manu-Smriti, shows that it falls far short of the Vedic ideal. The original ideal has in the long lapse of ages suffered considerably owing to a general weakening in the spiritual aspirations of the people in general. I have no time now to trace the causes and the process of degeneration in the spiritual tone of the people which has gone on since the Vedic Laws were first given to our race. It is enough for our present purpose to state that the process set in when the Rishis and other lofty personages ceased to personally guide the religious and social affairs of our people—as they did at first, living as men amongst them—and left the people to their own resources to make their way in the world and to work out their further progress with the help of the teaching they had left behind. With the withdrawal of this direct guidance of the Rishis, the spiritual tone of the people—which under the direct guidance of those lofty personages was kept very high—became low, and the sensual and materialistic tendencies of the Aryans, who were then as a people not so highly cultured in spiritual matters, began to assert themselves. In course of time their spiritual aspirations grew weak; and in the end, physical strength having gained the upper hand in social matters, the stronger man has held the weaker woman in subjection. It should not, however, be understood that the people themselves as a whole have gone on degenerating in all respects. Far from it. On the contrary, the people

as a whole have gone on progressing in all directions. Intellectually, morally, and even spiritually, there has been a marked progress as the ages have gone by, though spiritual giants like the great sages of old were not quite so common as before among the later Aryans, they appearing only as meteoric phenomena at long intervals for restoring spiritual balance in the affairs of the Aryans when unduly disturbed. This statement may need some explanation, which I proceed to give. According to our Sacred Tradition, our Aryan community, in the nascent stage of its early history, was led in person by Rulers and Teachers of the rank of Manus and Maharshis—Vaivasvata Manu, Vasishtha, Vyasa, etc. As the community grew from infancy to maturity, these Rulers and Teachers loosened their leading strings and allowed the community to manage its own affairs in the light of the teaching they had left behind and thus grow into a self-reliant people. Though the community as a whole continued to advance in general culture, it was not possible for it to maintain itself at the spiritual level to which it attained under the personal rule and guidance of the Manu and the Maharshis. With the withdrawal of their direct guidance, the community gradually sank in spirituality to the level of its general culture. If we study our ancient history we shall find that at some particular points the level of our general culture and our moral and spiritual tone was not so high,—was even much lower than it is at present,—and that Higher Beings had to intervene occasionally whenever matters

reached a critical point,—whenever the even though slow progress of Dharma received a set-back from an upheaval of unspiritual tendencies, and the social and religious institutions of the time were affected very much for the worse. We shall further find that through all these vicissitudes we Hindus, as a whole—if we take into account not the brahmans only, but all classes of people including the lowest—have been progressing, advancing all along in general culture and improving our social and religious institutions from time to time. However much we have thus advanced in general culture, we have not yet attained to anything like the level of the Great Sages,—the progenitors of the Aryan race—in spiritual enlightenment; nor have we yet realised or assimilated the Vedic ideals of spiritual life they held up to us. These ideals still remain the highest we have to work up to, and they will continue to be our ideals for ages to come. It is only the social and socio-religious institutions,—the external forms embodying these ideals,—which we will have to alter and improve, according to our advance in general culture,—and in those matters only which fall within the scope of our mind and senses, of our perception and judgment,—while adhering to the Vedic teaching in all matters which transcend our vision and understanding.

**Readjustment of the present system.**

9. Let us now see how the working out of the Vedic ideals of married life in our community was affected by the fall in its spiritual tone and the consequent domination of the physical might and

the materialistic and sensualistic tendencies in all social concerns of life. The immediate result was a fall in the woman's social status. From being a comrade in married life and a helpmate in all concerns of life, the physically weaker woman was held in subjection by the stronger man and came to be regarded as a handmaid catering for his pleasures in earth-life, which became the chief object of his concern. She was denied all the intellectual, moral and spiritual culture that was open to man and which would make her a self-reliant co-worker along with man. She was considered fit only for housekeeping under his protection and lead, and for bearing and bringing up children for him. When the responsibilities of reproductive function had been discharged man thought he could leave his wife and family and become a forest-hermit (Vanaprastha) or a wanderer (Parivrajaka), hoping to pursue a life of spiritual devotion with undivided attention, undisturbed by the cares of his family and community. The wife, uncultured as she was, could not associate with him in his spiritual life; she could not as erstwhile help him through her own line of spiritul culture, nor could she be so helped by him. She was to live under the care and protection of her son or some other male relative. Sometimes, though rarely, men who conceived a loathing for sexual life altogether even before marriage were allowed to be life-long celibate students, or forest-hermits or Parivrajakas. These celibate orders had thus their origin in the fall of woman's status. Uncultured as

women were, they were regarded as unfit to be helpful associates in purely spiritual concerns of life. Nay, their very sight was to be avoided by men as something very obnoxious to their spiritual progress. Thus the high purpose of life which was to be achieved in married condition by cultured men and women was gradually lost sight of, and marriage was regarded as only a means to the satisfaction of lust. Women have come to be always associated with carnal pleasures of life and their company has therefore been held to be prejudicial to the pursuit of a pure spiritual life. As these celibate orders had to renounce all concerns of family and community, the institution proved a dead loss to the society as a whole, which became much the poorer as all men of experience and higher wisdom withdrew from the guidance of the affairs of the community, leaving it practically in the hands of freshmen lacking wisdom and experience. The lead of the community having fallen into the hands of the inexperienced men, it is no wonder that the inevitable adjustments in our institutions made from time to time to suit the changing environments have often in the end proved detrimental to the progress of the community. The institution of marriage is one of those most affected by such adjustments; and when we view our present system in the light of the Vedic ideals we see our way how to readjust it to the original high ideals and in accordance with the standards of our higher culture and refinement.

**Spiritual basis of the present system.**

10. We shall now proceed to study our present system of marriage to see how far it subserves the main purpose of life,—how far it represents the Vedic ideal of married life through which the main purpose of life has to be achieved. Here we will do well to bear in mind that the main purpose of life as set forth in the Veda consists in such an all-round development of the active side of human nature as will lead to a realisation of the immortality and divinity of the human soul. We must also bear in mind how married life according to Vedic Law subserves this purpose, how living in society and in family man may fully achieve the highest spiritual aspirations,—nay, how married life in the family and in the community affords a field for the exercise of activities leading to the realisation of man's oneness with Brahman, how the co-operation of a cultured man and a cultured woman leads to efficiency in all fields of activity and to the fulfilment of the highest spiritual aspirations. Let us first get some clear idea of the highest purpose of an Aryan's life as set forth in the Veda and see how married life according to the Vedic ideal, which still forms the groundwork of our present system, subserves that purpose; for, then we shall clearly see where the present system is defective and how it may be reformed. The path of Dharma,—the path of true spiritual progress which the Aryan has to tread in life,—is one of intense activity coupled with true wisdom. The path of Dharma originally laid down

for the guidance of the Aryan is, in its most authoritative and purest form—according to our Sacred Tradition—outlined in the Bhagavadgita, in the second and third adhyayas. It is there spoken of as Yoga, combining a knowledge of the true nature of the soul and a life of service and unselfish activity;—a combination of Sankhya and Yoga, Jnana and Karma, Vidya and Avidya, with Bhakti or loving devotion to God added to them. This path of Dharma or Yoga is the same as the path of Yajna said to have been taught to the early Aryan:

**सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।**
**अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वं एष वोस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥**

"Prajapati created people along with Yajna and said at first: 'by this shall ye produce; may this fulfil your heartfelt desires.'"

In this life of Yajna,—it is said there further on,—men nourish Devas and Devas nourish men, and this mutual strengthening leads to the highest good of man and the whole world. The most efficient worker on this path of Yajña is he who, recognising the inherent immortal nature of his own true Self as one with Brahman,—the Supreme Infinite One, the Divine Lord of the universe,—does all work in a spirit of devotion and service to the Divine Lord, and as a part of the Divine Lord's work of the world-progress, and in co-operation with Devas and other agents of the Lord. It is this path of Yoga or Yajna which the Divine Lord taught to men through the progenitors of humanity such as Vivasvat, and was handed down

through Manu and Ikshvaku to the early Aryans. When it had long been forgotten in the course of ages, Lord Shri-Krishna taught it again on the field of Kurukshetra to Arjuna for a spiritual re-suscitation of the Indo-Aryans, the Hindus. It has to be taught again and again till it is quite assimilated and becomes part and parcel of the popular aspiration and constitutes a primary working factor in life. This Yoga, or Yajna, or Dharma, as it is variously called, forms the life-work of the Aryan, which he has to achieve in married life. There are four aspects or departments of this life-work of the Aryan to which I have already referred as the four lines of activities of married life, relating respectively to the work of Rishis, Pitris, Devas, and Brahma, the four lines of social service concerned with the educative, reproductive, economic, and purely spiritual functions of the community. These four lines of work in the aggregate constitute the Dharma of the Aryan's married life and are spoken of as Yajnas,—Deva-Yajna, Pitri-Yajna, Brahma-Yajna, and so on. These Yajnas are now-a-days observed as rituals, not as lines of strenuous life-work connected with the actual every-day life of the community. These rituals, we must understand, are only symbolic processes, serving as reminders to us of the several lines of our life-work and the spirit with which we are to engage in the activities connected with them. Some of these rituals are no doubt, in part, magical processes productive of physical and super-physical results when properly gone through; but these results

are not in themselves quite so important for the man performing them as the spirit with which he performs them. These results attract only the unenlightened, while the enlightened man makes of the rituals channels of the spiritual force welling up within him and carries the sacrificial spirit connected with the observance of the rituals on to the whole work of his life. A difference is made in our scriptures among the Yajnas performed by the enlightened and the unenlightened. An act of Yajna accompanied with Vidya,—with a recognition of the divinity of the soul and a spirit of sacrifice and unselfish service,—is said to be far more efficacious and to have a far higher spiritual value than the same act done with a longing for the immediate physical or superphysical result. It is Yajnas of the former kind which lead to a realisation of unity with the Divine Lord. Speaking of the forty *Samskaras* or sacramental rituals—including Upanayana, marriage, and all sacrificial rites—Gautama says that they cannot lead to union with Brahman unless they are accompanied with a full development of spiritual qualities, *Atma-gunas*. Not only rituals, but all our activities, will have a spiritual value to the extent that they form expressions of our true inherent spiritual nature, which may be recognised in its eightfold manifestation, as the eight *Atma-gunas* which Gautama has enumerated as follows:—(1) **दया सर्वभूतेषु,** kindness and compassion to all creatures in distress; (2) **क्षान्तिः,** forgiveness, freedom from anger and resentment; (3) **अनसूया,** absence of envy; appreciation

of the good in others however little; (4) **शौचम्**, purity and righteousness, (5) **अनायासः**, moderation, freedom from worry; (6) **मङ्गलम्**, constant quest of the good; (7) **अकापण्यम्**, cheerful charity; (8) **अस्पृहा**, freedom from greed or covetousness. In these ways our true Self manifests itself in life. However efficacious the rituals may be in other respects, they have no spiritual value unless they are ensouled by the true Self, unless they form expressions of the Higher Self in these and kindred ways. As Gautama says, a man who has fully developed these qualities in his life-work can alone attain unity with Brahman, whereas a man who has gone through all the forty Samskaras, but who has not developed the eight spiritual qualities, cannot attain unity with Brahman and rise to His regions. So also in the case of the sacrament of marriage, we should understand its full meaning and the true nature of the married life into which it initiates us. The mere ritual, very elaborate as it has now grown, may vaguely indicate the solemnity of the step we are taking; but our married life will not be quite so effective if we do not understand the meaning of the vows and pledges taken at the time of marriage and of the high purpose of our married life. Such an understanding will give us also an idea of the sort of preparation necessary for the man and the woman about to marry and an insight into the meaning and purpose of the rules and regulations of marriage and married life.

**Previous preparation for Marriage.**

11. The most essential part of the marriage

ritual as binding together man and woman indissolubly as husband and wife is, as Manu says, *Saptapadi*, ceremony of treading seven steps. This ceremony is purely symbolic, and binds the man and the woman together by a pledge of life-long partnership and co-operation in all concerns of life, mentioned as seven. Our activities in life are directed to the securing of food, power, health, wealth, the benefits of the seasons, purity of life, and to spiritual bliss; and these seven lines of activity constitute the seven *padas* or concerns of life. While treading the seven steps in a ceremonial fashion, the bride is exhorted to associate her every step or line of activity with Vishnu, the all-sustaining Lord of the universe, dedicating all her work to His service and receiving His blessing all the way in her life. Then the bridegroom asks the bride to be his comrade,—his *Sakha*,—in all the seven concerns of life, and prays that nothing may happen to break asunder this comradeship at any time. Then the couple take solemn vows pledging themselves to love and please each other to the utmost, to think best of each other, to enjoy together all wealth and power, and to maintain perfect harmony in all their thoughts, aspirations and plans of life. This pledge sets the seal of marriage on the couple, who immediately proceed to fulfil the purposes of married life. If we clearly understand the meaning of the pledge to be taken at the time of marriage by the bridegroom and the bride, we will have an idea of the sort of previous preparation needed on the part

of the man and the woman who wish to marry, in the Vedic sense of the word. The terms of the exhortation and the pledge shew clearly that man and woman should both have at the time of marriage clear ideas of their joint life-work and of its high purpose. They enter on the duties of married life, not as mere novices, but as responsible persons having had a full previous training, woman as well as man. Woman is to be man's comrade in life, his *Sakha*, with the same range of knowledge and interests, mature in body, mind and understanding, able to enter into a purposeful union on equal terms with a man of equal status as life-partner of her own free choice,—both dedicating their life-work as service to the Divine Lord of the universe, both ready to fulfil the purposes of married life from the very day of marriage onward. Every one of us knows how in the case of man the life of Brahmacharya forms a preparation for married life. It is said in our Sacred Tradition that in former ages woman also had to undergo the same preparation prior to marriage. So long as high Vedic ideals of married life were followed in practice in their true spirit, men and women had both to undergo the training of Brahmacharya as a preparation for the responsible duties of married life. But when Rishis ceased to personally guide the affairs of the community, its spiritual tone sank to the level of its low general culture. All the socio-religious institutions through which high spiritual ideals of life were worked out suffered degeneration and gradually became masses of dry lifeless ritualistic

forms, many a wearisome and adventitious ceremony having been added to the original simple rituals pregnant with life and meaning. Sensuality and materialism gradually came to rule the life of the general mass of the community, till in the end to the physically weak woman's lot fell the work of ministering to man's material comfort and pleasure, and she was given only a very subordinate place along with man in the religion of ritualistic worship. Woman was held fit only to attend to the creature comforts of the family, while man alone was held worthy of directly offering worship to God. Though with the general advance of the community in culture woman's status has considerably improved in recent times, she is assigned by law (smriti) a much lower status than she actually enjoys in society. One result of degeneration in the ideal of married life has shewn itself in the law's denial of student-life to woman, in the degeneration of man's Brahmacharya into a mass of external forms and in its survival in a mere semblance of the original. During student-life in its original form—as we may still learn from the existing formulas (Vedic mantras) of *upanayana* and *Yagadiksha*,—the youth of both sexes preparing for their life-work in society were taught to recognise the divinity of their true Self—of the Spirit distinct from their bodies,—and to exercise control of the Spirit over the body, senses and mind,—which is the literal meaning of Brahmacharya, spiritual life. And then, while leading a life of service rendered to the spiritual teacher as to an embodiment of the

Divine Lord Himself, they were taught certain spiritual truths to master by deep meditation, and certain rules of conduct for scrupulous observance in practical life. They were set certain tasks, in performing which they developed resourcefulness and self-reliance. They were also taught certain mantras—or words of power—which they were to ponder upon and master till they could use them to invoke Devas or Higher Intelligences to their aid. By such training and culture their souls became as pure and strong as fires, and it was such pure and fiery souls that united at marriage for the fulfilment of their life-work as laid down in the Vedic Law. The formulas (mantras) of pledges used in the *Saptapadi* section of the marriage ritual are made up of the same words as are addressed, in the Vedic Ritual of Agnichayana, to the fire of the individual soul of the aspirant when it is joined to the ever pure Cosmic Fire or the Universal Soul. This only shews that it is two such individual souls, —each living in unison with the Supreme Lord and devoted to His service,—that are to join together in marriage. No more need be said to impress the lofty spiritual meaning of marriage and married life and the necessity for a previous training of man and woman in preparation for their life-work in married life. It is such pure and strong souls who, united in bonds of marriage, are to enter into the life of the community, and who, working in one or more of the four lines of social activities, can realise their oneness with the Supreme Lord of the world who is ever guiding human evolution along the line of true progress.

**Marriage and Varna.**

12. We are now in a position to understand the rule of marriage referring to the Varna and Gotra of men and women to be married. The Vedic scheme of life is, as we have seen, intended for the Aryans, for men and women of *Varna*, for those who are *seekers* of fellowship with the Divine Lord, who recognise the divinity of the soul and seek to realise in actual life the oneness of the soul with the Divine Lord. There is a rule of marriage, a bye-law as it were, to the effect that marriage should take place between men and women of the same Varna. This rule presupposes a grouping of the people into some recognised divisions. The grouping we are now familiar with is the division of the people according to their professional occupations into Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. According to this grouping, the rule would mean that the men and the women who are to be married must by nature and training be qualified for the same civil or professional occupations in married life among the four, namely, Teaching, Military, Commercial and Industrial. This grouping is comparatively of a recent origin and growth, having had its origin when the spiritual tone of the Aryan community was low and the external and material interests as represented by the civil occupations loomed large in the people's eyes, developing tendencies for that hereditary exclusiveness which have finally led to the compartmental division of the people into castes based on mere accident of birth. But we have reasons to

believe that a more natural and spiritually significant grouping of the people consistent with the Vedic ideals of life-work was prevalent when the people were still in touch with the original living ideals of spiritual life. I refer to the grouping of men and women according to the special lines of activities chosen by them as the dominant concern of their married life, pursued as service to God and His Agents,—such as education of the youth, rearing of progeny, development of the natural resources, and pure spiritual life. Then the meaning of the rule would be that the man and the woman about to marry must be those who have chosen the same line of work as the dominant concern of their married life. They are of the *same Varna*, because they have chosen to *seek* God and serve him along the *same* line of life-work. It is, as I have shewn already, with reference to such lines of work chosen by the married couples that their marriages were known as *Arsha*, *Prajapatya*, *Daiva* and *Brahma*. In this grouping there is a direct reference to the idea of service to God and to the community, which forms the spiritual side of the life-work, whereas in the grouping of people according to civil occupations,—which in a way roughly corresponds to the other grouping,—the original idea of service has gone to the background, giving place to the professional interests of classes and individuals. As a matter of fact, this grouping according to professional occupations —which has come down to us as caste—was non-existent in the early periods of Aryan history when

the Vedic ideals of life were prevalent in their pristine purity.

In this connection we will do well also to bear in mind that *Varna* does not originally mean colour or caste. *Varna* is etymologically the same as *Varana* (seeking) or *Vrata* (devotion, spiritual aspiration). It is used in this sense in some Vedic sacrificial mantras; and in the word *Varnin* synonymous with *brahmacharin* it means *brahmacharya*, life of spiritual devotion. Interpreted in this sense of the word, persons of the same *Varna* are those who consciously seek to serve God in the same line of life-work. It was only in the latest periods of our social history when the spiritual side of life ceased to attract popular devotion that the ideas of *colour*, *caste* and *race* came to be associated with the word *Varna* and were imported into the Vedic scheme of marriage and married life.

**Marriage and Gotra.**

13. I shall now proceed to consider the rule of *Gotra* in relation to marriage. It is laid down as an inviolable rule that a man and a woman of the same *gotra* should not marry. The inviolability of the rule points to some deep spiritual significance underlying it, as lapses are permitted only in matters other than spiritual. What then is the spiritual significance of *gotra* when we speak of affinity or variety in *gotra* between two persons in the Aryan community? It cannot mean blood-relationship, descent by blood from the same ancestor; for blood-relations are technically known as *sapinads*, persons of the same flesh and blood,

and definite rules are laid down as to the extent of affinity in blood to be avoided in marriage. *Gotra* affinity is deeper than that of blood, and is to be avoided in marriage, however remote blood-relationship may be. *Gotra* in its vedic sense means spiritual heredity. Seven primary lines of *gotra* or spiritual heredity are mentioned in our scriptures, each named after a Maharashi or great sage. It is only in this sense that we can understand the rule that the *gotra* of a Kshatriya is the same as that of his Purohita or spiritual preceptor. The *gotra-rishis* are named in invoking Agni, the sacred Fire: "I invoke the Pure One, as Bhrigu, Aurva and Apnavana did." *Gotra*, therefore, means the manner of invoking God and worshipping Him, which differs with people according to their religious temperaments; and those who worship God in the same fashion according to their temperament are said to be of the same *gotra*. It is this spiritual affinity more than the physical which is to determine kinship between souls, especially in the case of persons who have left their physical bodies and passed away beyond the earth. In matters concerning spiritual ministrations to the dead such as Shraddhas and Yagas, it is this affinity that is taken into account, and it is this affinity that rules the system of adoption of sons and daughters by childless persons. Distinctions of *gotra* as separate from those of *varna* may roughly correspond to the various lines of spiritual devotion—known as karma-marga, Jnana-marga, Bhakti-marga, and so on,—which are determined by the religious

temperaments of the individuals. The original or the main purpose of the rule insisting on a variety of gotra in the case of the man and the woman to be married seems to be to add to the wealth and range of the spiritual life of the couple and to enable them to attain a better realisation of the soul's oneness with the Supreme Lord in whom all the several aspects of spiritual life corresponding to the seven gotras are found in a synthetic combination. The rule that at mariage the man and the woman should be of different gotras is a sure indication that the woman, like the man, must have previously undergone spiritual training according to her religious temperament, must have awakened the fiery Spirit within her in the way suited to her temperament. In the marriage rituals now current among us, the processes antecedent to *pani-grahana* or the marriage proper include the bride's *maunji-dharana* corresponding to Upanayana which initiates one into the life of Brahmacharya. The words put into her mouth in connection with this ceremonial act show what her life antecedent to marriage ought to be. She says: "Seeking purity of thought, offspring, soundness of the body and the womb, I devote myself to the service of Agni and gird myself to lead a righteous life and secure happiness." I may again refer to the ancient practice of allowing girls to lead a life of Brahmacharya and to study Vedas, like boys, prior to marriage. It is the woman who has thus led a life of Brahmacharya, who has thus consciously lived a strenuous life of student, pure in body and

mind, in the way suited to her religious temperament—it is such a woman that offers her hand in marriage to a man who has led an equally pure life in the way suited to his religious temperament different from her own. Thus the woman of one gotra marries a man of different gotra, and they take pledges and vows of harmonious work in all the seven concerns of life. This relation of husband and wife is the type of all love and friendship: **सख्यं साप्तपदीनं स्यात्**, true friendship extends to all the seven concerns. Even after the ceremony of *Sapta-padi* which completes the marriage proper, the couple, both grown-up adults, have to lead a life of brahmacharya or celibacy for some time longer, while living together in close association under the same roof and even sharing the same bed at night—as is done even now for three nights during the marriage ceremony—both demonstrating thus the mastery of their Spirit over the body. Even when this period—extending from three days to one year, according to the power of continence attained by the couple—is over, it is not till the woman has shown herself ready and willing that the man may approach her for sexual embrace. Mark the words in which the newly wedded wife invites the husband on this occasion and the words in which he responds. The wife says:

**अपश्यं त्वा मनसा चेकितानं तपसो जातं तपसो विभूतं ।**
**इह प्रजामिह रयिं रराणः प्रजायस्व प्रजया पुत्रकाम ॥**

"I have found thee intent at heart on consummation, thee who hast had thy birth in *tapas*

(self-restraint) and who art enriched with *tapas*. Investing me here with progeny and wealth, do thou reproduce thyself through our offspring, thou who art desirous of progeny."

The husband responds thus:

**अपश्यं त्वा मनसा दीध्यानां स्वायां तनूं ऋत्वियें नाथमानां ।**
**उप मामुच्चा युवतिर्बभूयाः प्रजायस्व प्रजया पुत्रकामे ॥**

"I have found thee intent at heart on consummation, seeking impregnation in thy body; do thou, a mature woman, enjoy my embrace and reproduce thyself through our offspring, desirous as thou art of progeny."

Even prior to this stage in the ceremony of Soma-yaga she expresses herself thus addressing Agni:

**त्वष्टीमती ते सपेय सुरेता रेतो दधाना ।**
**वीरं विदेय तव संदृशि माऽहं रायस्पोषेण वियोषं ॥**

"Well developed in body, by Thy grace I shall join my husband; and endued with sound germs let me bear his seed and get a virile child by Thy grace; may I ever enjoy plentitude of wealth."

**The present system of Marriage.**

14. Enough has been said, I believe, to show the status of woman at the time of marriage according to the Vedic ideal. Look at that picture and this; look at the present system of marriage in which the bride is but a child or even an infant. What a fall! We do not seem to be even honest in our fall. We still pretend to guide all our life according to Vedic ideals; we still use

Vedic formulas in our marriage ceremonies. The whole marriage ceremony of the present day looks a mere mockery. In the highest form of marriage prescribed for the Brahmanas, the father gives away in irrevocable marriage a mere child or infant to one who is equally a child in age, who at any rate is a child in so far as he is ignorant of the high Vedic ideal of marriage and married life; and this is called the Brahma form of marriage, in which, as understood of old, the bridegroom and bride have to take solemn pledges and vows, proposing to devote their whole married life to a line of purely spiritual activities uncontaminated with any concern for the mundane affairs of individuals or of the community. We are perhaps not altogether to blame: we are not guilty of any conscious violation. We are indeed quite innocent, being altogether ignorant of the meaning of the words put into our mouths during the marriage ceremonies, or repeated for us by the priests who are equally ignorant of their meaning and therefore equally innocent and guiltless. We may even absolve ourselves from the guilt because we only follow the dicta of our law-givers (Smriti-Karas), who, in their turn, lost sight of the original ideals or concealed them from us and preserved them only in names and ceremonial forms which have lost all their meaning to us. To convince ourselves of this, we have only to look at their definitions of the four higher kinds of marriage. The *Brahma* marriage is defined as one in which the father of the girl gives her away in marriage

bedecked with rich clothing and jewels, to a man learned in Vedas; the *Daiva* as one in which the father gives away the girl to a priest officiating at his sacrificial rite; the *Prajapatya* as one in which the father gives the girl away binding the bridegroom to live a married life till death; the *Arsha* as one in which the girl's father accepts from the bridegroom one or two pairs of cattle (bull and cow). In these definitions reference is made only to the attitude of the girl's father in giving her away in marriage and to his benefits; there is no reference at all to the bride's and the bridegroom's aims and purposes of married life such as we have referred to in describing the Vedic ideals of married life. Though in the present system of marriage we may plead ignorance and the force of custom for not consulting the aims and aspirations of the immediate parties concerned in marriage, there is no such excuse for a father giving his daughter away in marriage or accepting a girl as wife for his son, out of purely pecuniary considerations. Neither is there any excuse for a man marrying a woman for a satisfaction of the momentary lust, or by use of force, or by deceitful means. Such marriages are condemned in the Smritis as Asura (demoniac), Gandharva (nymphic), Rakshasa (fiendish) and Paisacha (devilish). The offspring of these degraded marriages, the shastras say, will be given to cruelty, lying and irreligious life; whereas out of the other four higher marriages are born persons of spiritual power and lustre, handsome and strong, who will

rise to fame and wealth, who will lead a righteous life and attain happiness.

**Simplest *Marriage* Ritual.**

15. One immediate result of an understanding of the true meaning of the Vedic ideal of marriage and married life will be the discrimination of the essential from the non-essential portions of our elaborate marriage ritual. The ceremonies now extending over five days are made up of sundry acts of ritual of various degrees of importance. Out of all this the *pani-grahana*, the seizing of the hand, especially the *sapta-padi* portion of it, constitutes the essential part, the marriage proper, in which the bridegroom and the bride take the pledges and vows which knit them together in indissoluble ties of marriage. None of the ceremonies antecedent to this can make them husband and wife; and whether the ceremonies subsequent to it take place or not, they do not cease to be husband and wife. In point of fact, the ceremonies preceding *Sapta-padi* relate for the most part to the preparation of the girl for marriage, including a semblance of the life of Brahmacharrya, while the rest relate to the process of suing for the hand of the girl from her father and his consenting to the marriage. The ceremonies succeeding *sapta-padi* relate to the couple's departure for the place of the bridegroom's residence where they are to live their married life. There they begin their married life with a life of Brahmacharya of three days' duration as a preparation for the *Garbhadhana* ceremony which is altogether

independent of marriage. Thus marriage in its simplest form may be reduced to *Saptapadi*. But to judge from the recorded rituals, the ceremony has never been so simple. The simplest form that was ever in practice seems to be the one found in the *Rik-Samhita*. There is in it a wedding hymn known as *Surya-Sukta*, which first in a few verses impresses the sacredness of marriage and then gives the mantras used in the marriage ceremony as current at the time of the compilation of the Rig-Veda in its present form, *i.e.*, about four thousand years ago. In speaking of the marriage of Surya and Soma—the prototype of all marriage—in the terms of Soma-Yaga, this hymn confirms my belief that our marriage ceremony has developed out of Soma-Yaga, that Indo-Eranian ritual which initiated the Aryan man and woman into the duties of sacred married life. It gives us clearly to know that the main object of married life is the helping of human souls in the realisation of their oneness with Soma or Vishnu, the all-sustaining Divine Lord of the world. This wedding hymn is complete in itself. It first describes the nature of Soma as the all-sustaining Power of the world and then it speaks of Surya,—the *Vach*, the human soul aspiring with prayers for attaining union with Soma—as being led in a wedding procession to marry Soma. Then follow the verses used in the marriage ceremony according to the order of the several events in the programme. They occur in the following order :

(1) The bride mounts the car to go to the

bridegroom's place of residence, accompanied with *prayers* asking the guardian angel of maidenhood to release the maiden from his charge, prayers for safe journey, and solemn declarations releasing the bride from her duty to her parent's home and family.

(2) The bride is welcomed to her new home

(3) Prayers for casting off all evil from the bride.

(4) Panigrahana—the marriage proper; prayers to Gods.

(5) Prayer for the couple's happy life.

(6) Installation of the bride as the mistress of the new home with prayers for complete felicity

(7) Final prayer of the couple to Gods to keep their hearts ever united.

The course of ritual as arranged here is complete in itself, including the most important parts of the ceremony. It exhibits one peculiar feature which we will do well to notice. The whole marriage ceremony is to take place in the bridegroom's place of residence, or, as was propably the original scheme, in the house newly set apart as the future residence of the married couple, but not in the house of the bride's father as is now the case. In all subsequent changes there has been a tendency to make the ceremony more complex and to transfer the whole of it to the house of the bride's father, evidently because bride has been too young at the time of marriage to live with the husband away from her parents and to take charge of a whole household.

**Conclusion.**

16. Thus a study of the original Vedic ideals of marriage and married life goes far to impress on us the sacredness of the institution and enables us to see how our present system has gradually grown out of, and is primarily based on, highest and noblest ideals and conceptions. To social reformers of all schools, to those especially who would preserve the sanctity of our institution and even elevate it to its highest original level, such a study is absolutely necessary and very illuminative. It shows the strong as well as the weak points in our existing practices which, even as they are, have commanded the admiration of many a foreign student and critic. Let us try to preserve the strong points therein and remove the weak ones, keeping always in view the high Vedic ideals of life as well as the demands of the advancing general culture and refinement.

# Appreciation of
# The 'Vedic Law of Marriage'
(*FIRST EDITION.*)

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Mrs. Annie Besant.—"I think that your pamphlet on the Vedic Law of Marriage is admirable, and I hope it will have a very wide circulation. I have written a notice of it in the MAY issue of the *Central Hindu College Magazine.*"

This notice runs as follows :—"Pandit A. Mahadeva Sastri has issued a pamphlet, entitled the Vedic Law of Marriage, which deserves very careful reading. The sub-title is 'or the Emancipation of woman.' The author in his preface notes three stages of the laws of marriage and the status of women in Indian history : the first, when woman and man were practically equal, when she had a thorough education, was free to choose between spiritual culture and the domestic life, and was an adult on marriage ; this was Aryan civilisation as shaped by the original Manu. The second stage was woman in a lower status, her education limited, study of the Vedas forbidden to her, the marriage age lowered, a hand-maid of man instead of his co-partner. In the third stage, she was made entirely dependent, was married as a child, and was entirely controlled by man. Each stage of woman's status has its corresponding stage in the

nation, which has degenerated with its women, until instead of the ancient Rishis we have 'the modern Bhattas, who know not what the investigation of a new truth means, and who hold it a sin to depart even slightly from the estabished custom which governs the interpretation of Vedas and Smritis.' This introduction is followed by an admirable analysis of the marriage mantras, and by other papers. This most valuable pamphlet should have a very wide circulation, and should do immense good."

T. RAMACHANDRA ROW, ESQ., B.A., B.L., Retired Sub Judge.—" Your pamphlet (on MARRIAGE) is very good. The theory is simple, yet deep and far-reaching, as all truths are. You base yourself on the Vedas, and you are the more justified in doing so because *Mantras* are there *still* used in the marriage ceremonies in spite of all changes of Smritis and customs. The rules deduced are simple and clear and are quite in consonance with common-sense; they are identical with those so much insisted on by advocates of reform on rationalistic lines. We base ourselves on the highest spiritual authority and are supported by the highest reason. Changes have occurred with the lapse of time and texts (sutras and smritis) have given their support to the changes as suited to the times. There is no attempt to reject, explain away, or place a strained interpretation on these later texts; they are all as a rule accepted and shewn as indicating the various stages through which the usages deteriorated. The times have now changed and it

is meet we should go back to the original Vedic ideals. These ideals insist on the education of both sexes and marriages after puberty. We should therefore now give sound education to the girls and prepare ourselves for restoring marriages after puberty.—This 'is the burden of your song and I am really charmed with its simplicity and grandeur. I am afraid our venerable Dewan Bahadur has placed himself in an unenviable position by his attempt to reconcile the Vedas and the Smritis and found himself supported neither by the orthodox nor the rationalists. I think your replies are effective and to the point."

BABU SRIS CHANDRA BASU, B.A., Sub Judge, Allahabad.—" I read with great interest the two pamphlets you were kind enough to send me some-time ago. They are very well written, and discuss the subject of MARRIAGE and CASTE in a manner which reflects great credit on your scholarship and erudition. These pamphlets deserve wide circulation."

N. SUBBA RAU PANTULU, ESQ., B.A., B.L., lately, Member of the Madras Legislative Council—" Your letter and the pamphlet on the VEDIC LAW OF MARRIAGE are to hand. I very much appreciate your learned disquisition on the subject. I have long thought that one like you with a full grasp of Western and Eastern ideals and literature should write a book on the Hindu Ideals of Marriage and the *Evolution* of Hindu Marriage. I hope you will find time to take up this subject, especially the latter portion and deal with it exhaustively."

V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI, ESQ., B.A., L.T., Author of 'Marriage after Puberty.'—"Your veiws are of course quite in accordance with mine, and I am happy that, from the larger outlook you have assumed, you confirm the conclusions to which my narrower study had led me....."

T. SADASIVIER, ESQ., M.L., Chief Judge, Travancore High Court.—"I thank you very much for the able pamphlet on the VEDIC LAW AND MARRIAGE. . . . In conclusion, allow me to express my sincere hope that by the grace of the Lord and the Rishis, earnest disinterested scholars and seekers after truth like yourself might rise in the holy land of ours in increasing numbers to purify, restore and vivify our ancient literature so that the future sons and daughters of our beloved and revered motherland might be more and more worthy of her."

THE INDIAN SOCIAL REFORMER, *March 29, 1908.*—"Hindus all over the country cherish the belief in their sacred books—though to most of them they are sealed books as well—as a national sentiment, and the service which Sanskrit scholars of unimpeachable orthodoxy like Mr. Mahadeva Sastri do by proving that the ancient Shastras are totally opposed to the present-day evil customs, is of great importance to the spread of social reform ideas. The fact that some of us do not stand in need of support from Sanskrit classics to our convictions on behalf of social reform, cannot be allowed to detract from the value to the Hindu community as a whole of such writings as

Mr. Mahadeva Sastri's able and convincing treatise on the VEDIC LAW OF MARRIAGE." . . . Again on *October 25, 1908*.—"The falling away from the high aims and ideals of the *Shruti* is marked by the *Smritis* and customs of the later degenerate times. The attempt, therefore, on the part of those who are for a better state of things, to directly appeal to the *Shrutis*, is certainly better than to mince matters and read into the *Smritis* liberal interpretations which they cannot bear . . . The pamphlet is a very lucid exposition of a very important subject, and the zeal and the outspokenness of the author encourage the reader to look forward with great pleasure to the perusal of the fuller and more thorough exposition of the subject which the author promises to bring out hereafter."

THE VEDIC MAGAZINE:—"The VEDIC LAW OF MARRIAGE: It is a learned treatise on a very momentous question. The learned author seems to have made a deep study of the problem, for the book under review has upon it the impress of profound and deep scholarship and patient research. . . He is right in holding the view that the chief obstacle in the way of reform is the regrettable fact of the modern interpretation of the shastric texts not being based upon the principles of exegesis adopted by Jaimini, Badarayana, Apastambha and other recognised ancient authorities. . . . Mr. Shastri has done well to look for the ideal of marriage in the *mantras*, for they and they only constitute the fountain head of all

knowledge. The learned author selects some of the mantras uttered by the bridegroom at the time of the marriage ceremony and proves beautifully that the Vedic ideal is the loftiest ever preached in the world. . . The booklet should be studied by all who are interested in the past history of India and who value truth for its own sake. Mr. Sastri has done an invaluable service to the cause of Vedic revival by bringing out this excellent production.

A VAIDIKA SANSKRIT PANDIT writes.— "తాము నాకు బంపిన VEDIC LAW OF MARRIAGE అను పుస్తకమును జదివితిని. అందలి అంశములన్నియు వైవాహిక మంత్రములు గృహ్యాసూత్రములు మొదలైనవాటికి ననుసారమైయే యుండుటచేత బ్రాహ్మలందరు అనుమోదింపదగినది గానె యున్నదిగాని మరివేరుకాదు. ఇయ్యది వధూవరుల ఆరోగ్యభాగ్యములకు కేవల సాహ్యకారి మాత్రమేకాక కలికాలమునందు తత్రాపి ప్లేగుసమాక్రాంతమగునీకాలమందు బాల్యమునందే వివాహములగుటయు తోడుతోనె విశ్లేష దుఃఖములో దగులుటయు మెండుగానున్నవి. విశ్లేష దుఃఖము పురుష విషయమునందు సుపరిహార్యమయి యుండినను బాల్యమునందు పతివియోగమును బొందునట్టి స్త్రీల కష్టముమాత్రము చెప్పనలవిగాకున్నది. అట్టివారు మానముగా బ్రదుకుటకు మార్గమే లేకుండుటచేత అనేక గ్రామములందు అనేకులు చెప్పరానంతటి కష్టములను అవమానములను అనుభవించుచుండుట బహుజనవిదితమె. ఈలాటి కష్టములు తమ పుస్తకముయొక్క ఉద్దేశముచేత సన్నగిల్లును. ఇదియునుగాక పతి సంబంధములేని కన్యావితంతువులకు ఎద్దియేని వైకల్పికవిధియున్న దానిని విచారించుట మంచిదే. మాబోటి వైదికులు ఈమాటలాడుట స్వవ్యాఘాతవిరుద్ధమె."